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The right to food

Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the right to food, Jean Ziegler, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/226.

* A/58/150.

** This report is submitted with delay owing to the current difficult circumstances at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights which slowed down the document clearance process.

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Summary

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food hereby submits his third annual report to the General Assembly.

The Special Rapporteur would reiterate to the General Assembly the importance of the right to food as a human right. It is a right that must be realized if hunger is to be eradicated around the world. The Special Rapporteur bears witness to the fact that little progress is currently being made in reducing hunger, despite promises made by Governments at the World Food Summit: five years later to halve the number of victims of hunger by 2015. In fact, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the number of undernourished people around the world increased in 2002 to 840 million people from 815 million in 2001. It is an outrage that hunger persists in a world where more than enough food is now produced to feed the global population. It is time to recognize that the neoliberal economic model is producing great wealth but is simultaneously leaving many in great poverty, struggling to feed themselves.

This report opens with an introduction and overview of the activities of the Special Rapporteur over the last year, before moving on to two conceptual chapters. The aim of these chapters is to further develop the conceptual framework and address difficult and pressing issues relating to the right to food. These issues include gender and the right to food, and transnational corporations and the right to food. A further chapter examines emerging examples of good practice and positive developments occurring with respect to the right to food around the world.

The chapter on gender issues looks at gender relations that can have a negative impact on the right to food. Despite important advances in the legal framework for the protection of women, there still remain patterns of discrimination that prevent the full realization of women's right to food, including for example, traditions that women should eat less than male members of the family — a custom that can result in significant gender disparities in levels of malnutrition.

The chapter on transnational corporations and the right to food takes as its starting point the fact that, in many respects and in many regions of the world, transnational corporations now have unprecedented control over the food system, yet there is no coherent system of accountability to ensure that they do not abuse this power. Just as human rights were originally developed to put limits on abuses of power by States, they must now be developed to circumscribe abuses of power by corporations. This chapter therefore tries to outline the legal framework that seeks to hold corporations to respect for human rights, particularly the right to food.

The final chapter describes positive developments in two countries — Brazil and Sierra Leone — before closing with the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur.

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I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food has the honour to submit his third report to the General Assembly in accordance with resolution 57/226 and Commission on Human Rights resolution 2003/25.

2. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food is contained in Commission on Human Rights resolutions 2000/10 and 2001/25. This year, the Commission decided to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for a further three years; this was endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2003/244.

3. The right to food is a human right, protected under international human rights and humanitarian law. It has been authoritatively defined in general comment No. 12 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as follows: "The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement (para. 6)." Inspired by the general comment, the Special Rapporteur has adopted a working definition of the right to food:

> "The right to food is the right to have regular, permanent and free access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensures a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear" (E/CN.4/2001/53, para. 14).

4. Despite the numerous commitments of Governments to eradicate hunger and to realize the right to food, hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition and violations of the obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food persist across the world, both in the North as well as in the South. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), progress in reducing world hunger has virtually come to a halt.[1] Promises made at the World Food Summit to cut by half the number of undernourished people have come to little, as few countries have been able to report progress in reducing the victims of hunger.[2] The number of undernourished people around the world increased in 2002 to 840 million: 799 million in developing countries, 30 million in countries in transition and 11 million in industrialized countries.[3] Every seven seconds a child under the age of 10 dies, directly or indirectly, of hunger somewhere in the world.[4] More than 2 billion people worldwide suffer from "hidden hunger", or micronutrient malnutrition, which has effects that are not always immediately visible; micronutrient deficiencies mean that children fail to grow and develop normally, their bodies are stunted and sometimes deformed, but so are their intellectual capacities and their immune systems, condemning them to a marginal existence. Hunger also has effects through the generations, as undernourished mothers give birth to children that will never fully develop, condemning whole countries to underdevelopment. All this in a world which, according to FAO, already produces more than enough food to feed its population.

5. In this introduction, the Special Rapporteur will take the opportunity to report on his activities to promote and monitor the right to food. Over the last year, the Special Rapporteur has engaged in numerous activities relating to the mandate. He has carried out two country missions — one to Bangladesh (24 October-4 November

2002) and one to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (3-12 July 2003). The Special Rapporteur also reported to the Commission on Human Rights in April 2003 (E/CN.4/2003/54 and Add.1 and 2). That report examined new initiatives at the international level with respect to the development of the protection of the right to food (the voluntary guidelines on the right to food) and the right to water (general comment No. 15 on the right to water of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). In line with the resolution of the Commission on Human Rights, in which the Commission called upon the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cooperate with the thematic procedures, in particular the Special Rapporteur on the right to food (2003/10, para. 2 (e)), the Special Rapporteur has requested permission from the Government to carry out a mission to that country and, in view of the urgency of the situation in Myanmar, has also requested an invitation to undertake a mission there. He urges the Governments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Myanmar to respond to his requests and authorize the missions.

6. Over the year, and in accordance with his mandate, the Special Rapporteur has also contributed to the follow-up to the World Food Summit: five years later, attending the first meeting in March 2003 of the Intergovernmental Working Group which will develop international voluntary guidelines on the right to food. Two submissions on the form and content of the guidelines have been submitted to FAO. It is vital that these guidelines provide concrete and practical advice on how to implement the right to food and that they strengthen, rather than weaken, the current legal protection of the right to food. In February 2003, he also participated in an expert consultation organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to prepare its submission on the voluntary guidelines to the Working Group, and his research team has participated in a number of meetings with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to raise awareness and encourage civil society participation in the development of these guidelines.

7. The Special Rapporteur and his team have also worked to raise awareness through teaching a seminar at the Graduate Institute of Development Studies of the University of Geneva on "Theory and practice of the defence of economic, social and cultural rights". A number of outstanding leaders in the human rights academic field participated in the seminar, contributing in their key fields of expertise, including Dr. Dzidek Kedzia, Chief of the Research and Right to Development Branch at OHCHR, Dr. Giorgio Malinverni, Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Geneva, Dr. Andrew Clapham, Professor of International Law at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, and Jean-Daniel Vigny, Minister at the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

8. The Special Rapporteur has also been monitoring and recording violations of the right to food across the world and he urges Governments to respond rapidly to his appeals in this regard. He has recently sent out letters to the Governments of Colombia, India and Argentina and awaits their responses. He has also intervened several times in Brazil, in relation to allegations of human rights violations occurring at the Usina Aliança sugar mill in Pernambuco, where peasant communities are fighting for their rights to land on land that is slated for expropriation. The Special Rapporteur has worked with the Brazilian national Special Rapporteur on this case, and urges the Brazilian authorities to examine the

situation, protect the communities from human rights violations and facilitate the peasant communities' access to land. He has also written to the Government of Brazil with respect to the terrible situation in the police station holding cells in São Paulo (44th *delegacia*), but is still awaiting a formal response. He has also collaborated with the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights during its examination of the report of Brazil under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

9. At the same time as monitoring allegations of violations, the Special Rapporteur has also followed positive developments with respect to the right to food in different national contexts, including developments in Brazil's programme "*Fome Zero*" ("Zero Hunger") and new developments in Sierra Leone. In following up on his mission to Brazil, the Special Rapporteur has maintained particularly close contacts with the Brazilian authorities. He had the honour to be invited to the inauguration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in January 2003 and participated in a long discussion on the right to food in Brazil with the President and his principal ministers and advisers. He urged the President to adopt a rights-based approach to his Zero Hunger programme. He has further followed positive developments in Sierra Leone and a member of his team participated in the "Symposium to operationalize the right to food in Sierra Leone" held in Freetown in May 2003. He reports on developments in Brazil and Sierra Leone in chapter IV.

10. The Special Rapporteur and his team have also attended numerous other meetings to promote the right to food, including the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2003, giving presentations and participating in programmes and training courses of Action contre la faim in Paris in March and May 2003, and attending the inaugural conference of a network of organizations working on economic, social and cultural rights in Thailand in May 2003. The Special Rapporteur was also honoured to be invited to speak on the occasion of the round table on human rights organized by the Government of Switzerland in May 2003. Contacts have also been maintained and established with numerous organizations at both governmental and non-governmental levels and with United Nations agencies. The Special Rapporteur has also published a short book on the right to food.[5]

11. The Special Rapporteur has also continued to develop the conceptual basis for his work on the right to food, building up a corpus of reports which build on previous reports. The present report introduces two new thematic issues — gender and the right to food, and transnational corporations and the right to food. The relevant chapters outline the developing legal frameworks, but also highlight some of the problems with respect to these dimensions of the right to food. In another chapter, the Special Rapporteur then reports on current positive developments occurring with respect to the right to food in Brazil and Sierra Leone, before drawing final conclusions and recommendations.

II. Gender and the right to food

12. In its resolution 2001/25, the Commission on Human Rights requested the Special Rapporteur to mainstream a gender perspective in his work. In response to this request, he has examined gender relations and the particular issues affecting women in relation to the right to food, particularly during his country missions. In

this chapter, an attempt is made to draw some preliminary observations on the linkages between gender and the right to food.

13. Women are disproportionately affected by hunger, food insecurity and poverty, largely as a result of gender inequality and their lack of social, economic and political power. In many countries, girls are twice as likely to die from malnutrition and preventable childhood diseases as boys, and it is estimated that almost twice as many women suffer from malnutrition as men. Unfortunately, however, there are still no global statistics on malnutrition or undernourishment rates disaggregated for men and women.

14. Yet women are key to food security. Women play vital roles in the production and preparation of food, in agriculture and in earning incomes to feed their families, and as mediators of nutrition education within the family, if they themselves are educated. And it is increasingly recognized that the health of women is crucial to the health of whole societies, as malnourished women are more likely to give birth to malnourished and underdeveloped babies. In countries where there are high rates of children dying before the age of five, this is being increasingly linked to maternal malnutrition. New scientific evidence in nutrition calls for a "life-cycle" approach to nutrition which recognizes the intergenerational links in nutritional status.[6] Underweight and malnourished mothers are more likely to give birth to underweight babies, whose mental and physical capacities may be severely stunted. Régis Debray has called these children "crucified at birth".

International instruments protecting women's right to food

15. Enormous progress has been made across the world in recent years in developing legal instruments to address discrimination and protect women. This section looks at some of the international instruments which protect women's right to food, highlighting articles that can be used to improve the protection of women's right to food. The following section, however, will move on to look at the continued difficulties in relation to gender and the right to food.

16. Women's right to food is protected, both explicitly and implicitly, in a wide range of international and regional human rights instruments. The strongest protection of the human right to food is found in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (arts. 3 and 2 (2)), which also contains guarantees of non-discrimination and of equal enjoyment for women of these rights. The right to food requires that Governments respect, protect and fulfil the right to food for their citizens and an interpretation based on gender must recognize that this could imply taking specific and different actions for women. General comment No. 12 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the authoritative definition of the right to food, also states that government policies to realize the right to food

> "should give particular attention to the need to prevent discrimination in access to food or resources for food. This should include: guarantees of full and equal access to economic resources, particularly for women, including the right to inheritance and the ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technology; measures to respect and protect self-employment and work which provides a remuneration ensuring a decent living for wage earners and their families (as stipulated in article 7 (a) (ii) of the Covenant); maintaining registries on rights in land (including forests)" (para. 26).

17. Women's rights are most fully protected in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Although the Convention does not explicitly refer to the right to food as such, it does protect women's equal access to land, credit, income and social security or safety nets, which are all essential elements of the right to food. As one example, article 14 (g) demands equal treatment in land and agrarian reform. Article 16 (h) ensures equal rights in terms of the ownership of property. A useful resource on women's rights to land and other resources is the document published by FAO entitled *Gender and Law – Women's Rights in Agriculture*,[7] which gives a full overview of different rights of women under different legal systems around the world, at both international and national levels. During times of armed conflict, special protection is also granted to women and their right to assistance, including food, under international humanitarian law (see E/CN.4/2002/58, paras. 72-106).

18. Women's rights are also strongly protected under provisions on equality and non-discrimination in many international legal instruments, including the conventions of the International Labour Organization.[8] At the national level, numerous laws also prohibit discrimination and provide for equality of women, and States are required to act with due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish discrimination and violence against women committed by the State or private actors.[9] It should also be recognized that within the context of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to food, the obligation of non-discrimination is an immediate obligation and is therefore not limited by the provision for progressive realization applied to other obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (art. 2 (2)), but must be implemented immediately.

Gender dimensions of the right to food: preliminary observations

19. Although significant advances have been made in developing legal protections for women, including protection of the right to food, there remains a gap between principle and practice in many contexts around the world. Even where legislation exists, women do not always have access to justice or the laws may not be enforced, and legal equality does not always amount to substantive equality. While advances have been made in women's formal rights, this has not been accompanied by adequate attention to making these rights meaningful and substantive so the real impact of international instruments on women's lives remains limited. Women continue to suffer de facto discrimination in access to and control over food, land, and incomes and other resources.

20. Intra-household discrimination in the distribution of food and income can severely affect women's right to food. As Amartya Sen so graphically illustrated in his article "More than 100 million women are missing", discrimination against girl children can result in high child malnutrition and high female mortality, with young girls dying from malnutrition and neglect.[10] During the Special Rapporteur's mission to Bangladesh, he found a marked gender disparity in malnutrition levels, with far more girl children underweight and stunted than boy children. In Bangladesh, social and cultural customs demand in many regions that women eat last, after the male members of the family, which also means that women often eat least, contributing to high rates of female mortality. In Bangladesh discrimination and devaluation of women are sometimes expressed in other very violent ways, including acid-throwing, where a woman is intentionally disfigured as an act of

vengeance, often leaving her unable to marry and with difficulties in finding work to feed herself. In cases where the private sphere is a key site of gender discrimination and subordination, addressing discrimination means moving beyond the public/private dichotomy, where the family is categorized as "private" and beyond the reach and responsibility of the State, towards taking concrete action to change perceptions of gender relations within the private sphere.

21. Continued discrimination in the workplace also means that the incomes of women are still less than those for men, leaving them less able to feed themselves and their families, particularly in the case of female-headed households. While women are increasingly being incorporated into the workforce, the terms of this incorporation are often exploitative, particularly in the low-skill, low-wage sectors. Increasing deregulation and the relaxation of labour laws under neoliberal policy strategies also make it harder for women to demand better wages and conditions, adding to the growing feminization of poverty. At the other end of the spectrum, much of women's work in the home and in agriculture is still not recognized as a productive activity, and this invisible labour is rarely remunerated. As a result, women are frequently economically dependent on men, which reinforces their lack of power and is often the reason that violence of different forms against women is often unreported. During the Special Rapporteur's visit to Brazil (see E/CN.4/2003/54/Add.1), he also found that gender discrimination often intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as race. In Brazil, for example, poverty and hunger is predominantly black.[11] The level of poverty for Afro-Brazilians is double that for Whites and Afro-Brazilian men earn on average less than 42 per cent of the salary earned by white Brazilians. Yet the salaries of Afro-Brazilian women are significantly lower than that as they suffer from double discrimination of both gender and race (see E/CN.4/1996/72/Add.1).

22. Women also face great difficulties in gaining secure access to and control over other resources, such as land, water and credit, as they are often not recognized as producers or juridical equals. Access to credit and secure land tenure is often denied to women because they are not officially recognized by government authorities as food producers or agricultural workers. Without access to productive resources, women's economic independence and ability to feed themselves are limited. According to FAO, while the proportion of women heads of rural household continues to grow, reaching more than 30 per cent in some developing countries, less than 2 per cent of all land is owned by women.[12] Customs and traditions in many parts of the world limit women's equal access to productive resources. In some countries, however, this discrimination is codified in customary law.

23. During the Special Rapporteur's mission to Niger (see E/CN.4/2002/58/Add.1), he found that Niger has three coexisting and complex legal systems — modern law, customary law and Islamic law. This pluralist system shows the rich legal heritage of the country, but is also a challenge to women's right to food. Customary law, in a syncretic mix with Islamic law, tends to be applied at community and family levels, but this gives women far less rights than the coexisting modern law, particularly with respect to inheritance rights. For example, custom permits child marriage of young girls, which, if consummated at too early an age, can have serious health effects, tearing apart their organs and resulting in a condition called fistula which also results in incontinence. This leads to their repudiation by their husbands, leaving them with little means of survival, often unable to feed themselves. The Special Rapporteur was also concerned by the large

number of reservations that the Government has entered upon its accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on the grounds of culture and custom, but which renders effectively meaningless much of the protections offered by the Convention. Clearly, there is a need to protect culture and difference, but that should not lead to the persistence of discrimination against women.

24. Gender blindness in policy development can also lead to the persistence of women's inequality and disproportionately affect their right to food. Policies of structural adjustment, deregulation and privatization often appear to be gender neutral, but their impacts on men and women are very different. The costs of economic restructuring, for example, are often disproportionately borne by women. It is vital to examine the gender-differentiated effects of economic restructuring under the current dominant economic model supported by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, which calls for a downsizing of State responsibility for social policy. While social policy used to revolve around issues of redistribution, universal provision and reducing levels of inequality, it now focuses on targeting the "poorest of the poor". This aims to "reduce poverty and destitution, but is unconcerned about the overall distribution of income and wealth within society".[13] As many women's rights advocates have pointed out, substantive equality for women will never be reached unless the State takes concrete positive action to improve the position of women relative to men. Formal equality of human rights is not enough — in fact, formal equality of rights will even generate inequality, if initial starting points and different disadvantages of men and women are not considered. The downsizing of the State reduces the capacity of the State to take positive action, despite the fact that under human rights treaties, most Governments have signed up to international human rights commitments to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food of women — that is, to take concrete positive action to address the issues of discrimination facing women and to ensure their substantive equality.

Preliminary observations

25. The right to food places obligations on the State to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food. Undertaking these obligations must be understood in a way that respects gender difference, understands existing obstacles facing women and seeks to improve the situation. In the first instance, the obligation to respect the right to food for women means that the State is obliged to refrain from doing anything that impedes women's existing access to food, water, land, income or other resources. The obligation to protect the right to food for women means that the State is obliged to protect women from all forms of discrimination by non-State actors, including discrimination in the workplace, in the private sphere, and in access to resources. The obligation to fulfil the right to food for women means that Governments have a positive obligation to create an enabling environment to ensure that women have sufficient access to resources to be able to feed themselves and, in the final resort, to support women who, for reasons beyond their control, cannot feed themselves. This positive obligation means that the State must take concrete positive action to improve the substantive equality of women and to challenge norms, traditions and customary laws that legitimate discrimination and violence against women, including within the family and within the household, particularly in relation to the allocation of food.

26. In this chapter, the Special Rapporteur has attempted to map out preliminary observations on the basis of the insights gained from the country missions that he has carried out to date. It will, however, also be important to conduct a further more in-depth study on gender and the right to food in the future in order to draw out the significant progress that has been made, in particular in jurisprudence and in the development of strategies for gender equality at national and regional levels, particularly in the context of the right to food.

III. Transnational corporations and the right to food

27. Under the terms of the mandate given by the Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur is charged with identifying "emerging issues related to the right to food worldwide" (resolution 2000/10, para. 10 (c)). This chapter sets out to examine one issue that is becoming increasingly important for the realization of the right to food: the human rights obligations of transnational corporations (TNCs) in light of the fact that corporations are exerting increasing control over the production and provision of both food and water. Given this increasing control over the food system, it is argued that transnational corporations must take responsibility and bear obligations with respect to ensuring human rights, including the right to food. This chapter outlines the obligations of transnational corporations to respect the right to food under international human rights law.

28. As pointed out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Global corporations can have enormous impact on human rights — in their employment practices, in their environmental impact, in their support for corrupt regimes or in their advocacy for policy changes".[14] Today, transnational corporations often have revenues many times greater than the revenues of the Governments of the countries in which they are operating. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), "Twenty-nine of the world's 100 largest economic entities are transnational corporations (TNCs)."[15] The top 200 corporations are estimated to control a quarter of the world's productive assets.[16] As financially powerful lobbying groups, corporations can also exert great control over laws, policies and standards applied in their industries, which can result in looser regulation and negative impacts on health, safety, and the price and quality of food.

29. The Special Rapporteur has received repeated appeals from non-governmental organizations to examine the human rights obligations of transnational corporations in the context of their increasing control of the food sector, from production to the processing and marketing of food. For example, many members of the over 400 non-governmental and civil society organizations attending the parallel NGO/CSO Forum on Food Sovereignty in Rome in 2002 raised concerns regarding increasing concentration in and monopoly control over the global market for agricultural seed, in particular the genetically modified seed market, which is dominated by the Monsanto corporation. Although it is generally agreed that genetically modified seeds can in some conditions bring higher yields, NGOs are concerned that increasing control over seeds by a few agro-alimentary corporations will eventually reduce competition, reduce choice and may lead to higher prices for seeds. Many organizations, including FAO, are also concerned that current biotechnology research is driven by commercial imperatives and does not focus on the food security needs of the poorest.[17] It is widely agreed that hunger persists, not because

a shortage of food supply, but rather because of very low incomes and unequal access to land, water, credit and markets. NGOs and farmers are particularly concerned by technologies that prevent seeds from regenerating and by the use of intellectual property rights over seeds, which requires farmers to purchase new seeds every year, threatening their independence and capacity to generate their own seed stocks. Although it is clear that the patent rights of corporations must be protected, the rights of small farmers must also be protected.[18] And, as Oxfam has pointed out, the rights of consumers must simultaneously be protected, through regulation, labelling, precautionary approaches and legislation on company liability for potential harmful effects on people or the environment.[19]

30. As another example, several NGOs raised concerns that, as one of the largest food processing corporations in the world, Nestlé dominates the market for breastmilk substitutes in many countries around the world, yet its marketing practices violate the internationally agreed International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. They allege that some Nestlé advertising has been found to discourage breastfeeding and to promote bottle feeding, which runs contrary to the Code.[20] United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), have expressed similar concerns.[21]

31. It is often assumed that corporations are neutral providers of goods and services and that market forces have everyone's interest at heart. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that monopoly control of the food system by transnational corporations can be directed towards seeking monopoly profits, benefiting the companies more than the consumer. The actions of transnational corporations can sometimes directly violate human rights standards, including the right to food. Despite the fact the transnational corporations increasingly control our food system, there are still relatively few mechanisms in place to ensure that they respect standards and do not violate human rights. As former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali stated in 1996, "the global reach of TNCs is not matched by a coherent global system of accountability". There is no existing "social contract" between individuals and TNCs. Over the centuries, human rights standards were developed to ensure that Governments do not abuse their power but, in an age where corporations are now more powerful than Governments, it is becoming imperative to extend the scope of application of human rights norms to ensure that corporations do not abuse their new-found power.

32. Under the traditional application of human rights law, it is usually only possible to hold a Government to account for violations of human rights; it is still not well understood how a corporation could be held to account for human rights violations. However, new developments are occurring within the study of human rights and it is now increasingly understood that there are two key ways of holding corporations to respect human rights — one indirect, the other direct. The first way derives from the fact that Governments retain a duty to protect people against any negative impacts that transnational corporations' activities might have on the right to food, which means that Governments must monitor and regulate corporations, at home and outside their borders. The second way is to impose direct obligations on the corporations, through the development of direct human rights obligations, intergovernmental instruments and voluntary commitments.

Obligation of the State to protect — indirect obligations

33. The right to food imposes three levels of obligations on the State: the obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food. It is the obligation to *protect* the right to food which is the most important obligation in this context, because it implies that Governments must regulate corporations to ensure that they do not commit violations of human rights.

34. So what does the obligation to protect mean? According to the Maastricht Guidelines (see E/C.12/2000/13):

> "The obligation to protect includes the State's responsibility to ensure that private entities or individuals, including transnational corporations over which they exercise jurisdiction, do not deprive individuals of their economic, social and cultural rights. States are responsible for violations of economic, social and cultural rights that result from their failure to exercise due diligence in controlling the behaviour of such non-state actors (para. 18)."

35. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights underlined in its general comment No. 12 on the right to food that "the obligation to *protect* requires measures by the State to ensure that enterprises or individuals do not deprive individuals of their access to adequate food" (para. 15). "As part of their obligations to protect people's resource base for food, States parties should take appropriate steps to ensure that activities of the private business sector and civil society are in conformity with the right to food" (para. 27). In relation to water, which is inherently linked to the right to food (see E/CN.4/2003/54, paras. 36-51), the Committee clarifies in general comment No. 15 that the obligation to *protect* includes "adopting the necessary and effective legislative and other measures to restrain, for example, third parties from denying equal access to adequate water; and polluting and inequitably extracting from water resources, including natural sources, wells and other water distribution systems" (para. 23). For the Committee, water is a public good fundamental for life and health (para. 1). Therefore, where water services (such as piped water networks, water tankers, access to rivers and wells) are operated or controlled by third parties, an effective regulatory system must be established which includes independent monitoring, genuine public participation and imposition of penalties for non-compliance (para. 24).

36. In the now infamous case of Cochabamba, Bolivia, the Government sold off the public water to Aguas del Tunari, a subsidiary of the transnational corporation Bechtel, in 1999. The company immediately announced an increase in water prices by up to 35 per cent, which for many Bolivians meant that water was no longer affordable (see E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/9). A public outcry led to broader civil unrest and the Government declared martial law to control the protests, but finally revoked the water privatization legislation.

37. The most important way to ensure respect for the rights to food and water is to put in place effective domestic legislation to protect people from violations by third parties, including transnational corporations — laws and regulations that protect access to land, drinking water, water for irrigation and a minimum income, and that prohibit interference with people's family or community means of subsistence, etc. — and provide effective administrative and judicial remedies.

38. At the national and regional levels, the obligation to protect human rights is well established in the jurisprudence.[22] For example, in a key decision for the right

to food issued in 2001, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights was faced with a complaint focused on the behaviour of an oil consortium between the State oil company and Shell in Nigeria. In this case, the Commission found violations of the African Charter in several respects, but, in particular, it referred to the obligations of States with regard to private actors in the context of the right to food. For the African Commission, "The African Charter and international law require and bind Nigeria to protect and improve existing food sources and to ensure access to adequate food for all citizens. Without touching on the duty to improve food production and to guarantee access, the minimum core of the right to food requires that the Nigerian Government should not destroy or contaminate food sources. It should not allow private parties to destroy or contaminate food sources, and prevent peoples' effort to feed themselves."[23] This courageous decision must be implemented and should be seen as an example to follow in other similar cases. Case law also exists at the national level, including in South Africa where the Constitution (arts. 7 and 27) obliges the State to protect the right to food, and in India where the Supreme Court stated that the Union and all the state governments shall protect the right of the workers to have access to medical facilities and drinking water.[24]

39. Other ways also exist in which States can *protect* the right to food of their citizens. For example, some States have taken action to ensure that their national law imposes human rights obligations on transnational companies. Jurisprudence is also emerging that demonstrates that it is possible to hold corporations responsible for violations of human rights, including the right to food. In South Africa, according to article 8 of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights applies to a natural or a legal person, which means that a transnational corporation could be held accountable for a violation of the right to food. In Uganda and Namibia, privatization has been accompanied by an extension of the ambit of their respective national Ombudsman's Office and Human Rights Commission to monitor the activities of the privatized entities.[25] In India, the Supreme Court held corporations accountable for violations of human rights, including the right to water.[26] Twenty-five countries have implemented the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes — a code applying to the behaviour of transnational corporations — in national law.[27]

40. Governments also have a responsibility to monitor and regulate the activities of their transnational corporations abroad. This means that "home" States should put in place effective domestic regulation and monitoring mechanisms and provide effective remedies for violations of the right to food if these occur. General comment No. 15 states that "Steps should be taken by States parties to prevent their own citizens and companies from violating the right to water of individuals and communities in other countries" (para. 33). Examples of ways to protect human rights abroad are "foreign direct liability" cases in Australia,[28] Canada[29] and in the United Kingdom,[30] in which transnational corporations are held responsible before home States' jurisdictions (under tort law) for violations of human rights abroad. Another interesting example is the Alien Tort Claim Act in the United States, under which any transnational corporations (not only those based in the United States) can be held accountable for complicity with human rights violations in other countries.[31] The European and Australian Parliaments, which have called for regulation over the activities of their transnational corporations in other countries, also have taken this obligation into account.[32]

41. Finally, home States have the obligation not to pressure the host State not to regulate the activities of transnational corporations. This has been taken into account, for example, in the Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development by which OECD member States agreed that enterprises should "respect the human rights of those affected by their activities consistent with the host government's international obligations and commitments" (para. II.2), and that "Governments have the right to prescribe the conditions under which multinational enterprises operate within their jurisdictions, subject to international law" (para. I.7). By this agreement, OECD member States shall use their influence to protect human rights, including the right to food, with regard to the activities of transnational corporations in host States.

Direct obligations of TNCs in international human rights law and standards

42. States have the primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights, and, as the European Court of Human Rights stated, a State "could not absolve itself of responsibility by delegating its obligations to private bodies or individuals".[33] However, transnational corporations should be bound to respect the national law of the host State in which they operate and of the home State in which they are based. It is also becoming increasingly clear that, under international law, intergovernmental organizations' instruments and voluntary commitments, transnational corporations can be held responsible for promoting and securing human rights.

43. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that the obligation to promote respect for human rights and to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance is addressed not only to States but also to "every individual and every organ of society". This must include transnational corporations. This interpretation has been confirmed by the General Assembly (see resolution 42/115) and by the Commission on Human Rights (see resolution 1987/18, para. 4), in which TNCs were urged to ensure that their activities did not adversely affect the process of implementing human rights in developing countries (para. 4).

44. Transnational corporations should also take into account in their activities the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states in its general comment No. 12 on the right to food:

> "While only States are parties to the Covenant and are thus ultimately accountable for compliance with it, all members of society — individuals, families, local communities, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, as well as the private business sector — have responsibilities in the realization of the right to adequate food" (para. 20).

45. There have also been important initiatives to develop the normative base for direct obligations for corporations. For example, the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and its working group on transnational corporations has adopted the "Norms on the responsibilities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises with regard to human rights" (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/12/Rev.2) based on existing international human rights instruments. This important document states that "Within their respective spheres of activity and influence, transnational corporations and other business enterprises have the obligation to promote, secure the fulfilment of, respect, ensure respect of

and protect human rights recognized in international as well as national law" (para. 1). According to the Norms, transnational corporations "shall respect economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights and contribute to their realization, in particular the rights to ... adequate food and drinking water ... and shall refrain from actions which obstruct or impede the realization of those rights" (para. 12). This is an important attempt to extend human rights, including the right to food, beyond the State-centric paradigm. It also tries to extend the obligations beyond the parent company to include all the suppliers to ensure that companies cannot deny obligations on the basis that they are not operating directly, but have contracted out much of their production or activities to local suppliers (para. 15). The Sub-Commission decided to transmit the Norms to the Commission on Human Rights for consideration and adoption (resolution 2003/16).

46. Other initiatives include declarations and guidelines that have been adopted by intergovernmental bodies and which serve as useful instruments to evaluate the activities of transnational corporations, even if they are not binding. The most important are the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (revised in 2000) and the 1977 ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, both of which apply to States and to transnational corporations. According to the ILO Tripartite Declaration transnational corporations "should respect the sovereign rights of States, obey the national laws and regulations, give due consideration to local practices and respect relevant international standards. They should respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the corresponding International Covenants adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations as well as the Constitution of the International Labour Organization and its principles ...". (para. 8).

47. According to the OECD Guidelines, all Adhering Governments (the OECD States, Argentina, Brazil and Chile) are bound to establish national contact points to disseminate information about the Guidelines and can handle a complaint about violations by a transnational corporation. In a number of instances, cases have been put to the OECD complaints mechanism by non-governmental organizations where human rights have been violated by a corporation.

48. Other important intergovernmental instruments applying to transnational corporations' activities include the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes adopted by the World Health Organization and UNICEF and the Code of Ethics for International Trade in Food adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The Secretary-General's Global Compact initiative, by which transnational corporations can commit themselves to "support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights within their sphere of influence" and "make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses" is also an important initiative and could be a powerful mechanism for ensuring accountability if monitoring mechanisms could be put in place.

49. Many companies themselves have also initiated their own policies or practices that recognize the importance of respecting human rights. Initiatives taken include signing up to codes of conduct. In 1999, OECD inventoried 233 codes of conduct, issued mostly by individual corporations.[34] Several companies now have their own policies on human rights. The Shell corporation, for example, now has a policy on how to protect human rights and when to speak out about human rights violations.

Reebok has a policy on child labour, and Nestlé has incorporated into its corporate business principles the standards set out in ILO conventions, the Global Compact principles and the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. While some of these policies amount to little more than improving their public image, in some cases, corporations are taking real action to respect human rights. Civil society can also help to improve the enforcement and implementation of principles that corporations have signed up to by monitoring their compliance with human rights principles. The new international voluntary guidelines on the right to food, which are currently being elaborated as part of the follow-up to the World Food Summit: five years later, should also serve to strengthen the framework governing the responsibilities of corporations with respect to the right to food.

Recommendations

50. **According to international human rights law and the commitments made in intergovernmental instruments, both host and home States have obligations to protect people against any negative impacts that transnational corporations' activities might have on the right to food. Transnational corporations also have direct obligations regarding the right to food under international human rights law, as well as national legislation, intergovernmental instruments and voluntary codes of conduct.**

51. **Transnational corporations should respect the international human rights treaties, national legislation and intergovernmental instruments and adhere to the codes of conduct to which they have committed themselves. However, it is important to admit that monitoring mechanisms remain limited, and transnational corporations are still rarely under scrutiny for their respect of human rights. It is therefore vital to strengthen monitoring mechanisms. Non-governmental organizations should have a crucial role to play in order to help States, human rights mechanisms and the transnational corporations themselves to ensure the fulfilment of all human rights, including the right to food. Special rapporteurs could also play an important role in monitoring the actions of transnational corporations. This could represent a valuable monitoring mechanism that can help transnational corporations to fulfil their human rights obligations.**

IV. Positive developments in promoting the right to food

A. Brazil

52. In Brazil, a vibrant, dynamic and comparatively wealthy nation, a new President came to power in January 2003, whose first priority is to eradicate hunger in Brazil, through his programme "Zero Hunger", a pioneering example to follow for the realization of the right to food. Through this programme, President da Silva hopes to eradicate hunger and malnutrition in Brazil over the next four years.

53. As the Special Rapporteur witnessed during his mission to Brazil in March 2002 (see E/CN.4/2003/54/Add.1), the country is now the tenth largest economy in the world and one of the world's largest food exporters, yet Brazil is still failing to feed its own people. Millions of Brazilians continue to suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Around 54 million people live below the poverty line and 22 million

people in Brazil live below the extreme poverty line, which means that they cannot afford to buy a food basket that provides the minimum caloric intake requirement of one individual per day. Food insecurity is largely due to poverty and lack of access to, and control over, resources, including land. Numerous violations of the right to food continue to occur, as persistent clientelism and vast inequities in access to resources limit the ability of the poorest to feed themselves. Eradicating hunger and reducing extreme levels of social inequality in Brazil will be essential to social stability and development.

54. President da Silva's "Zero Hunger" programme consists of a series of 41 measures that address the structural causes of hunger and seek to alleviate hunger immediately for the most vulnerable through the provision of safety nets and support, ensuring that locally specific measures are undertaken and adapted to local conditions and different livelihood patterns in rural and urban areas. The National Council for Food Security has been re-established, and will include 11 ministers from the relevant ministries and representatives from civil society and United Nations agencies. It will identify the most vulnerable groups, address discrimination and set up a coordinating mechanism that is representative and participatory. The programme clearly sets out time limits and delineates the responsibilities of different actors.

55. The Special Rapporteur recommends that other important initiatives on the right to food within Brazil should be incorporated into the programme "Zero Hunger":

(a) During the visit of the Special Rapporteur to Brazil, the then Government of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso announced the creation of a new National Council for the Promotion of the Human Right to Food in Brazil (CNPDA) within the Ministry of Justice. This is an important initiative and the Council should be constituted so as to play an important role in monitoring the realization of the right to food, as well as violations of the right to food. As such, one member of the Council should be on the National Council for Food Security to ensure a human rights focus for the programme;

(b) At the initiative of Brazilian non-governmental organizations, the post of "National Special Rapporteur" on the right to food was created, based on the United Nations model but to operate in the national context. Dr. Flavio Valente was nominated by civil society to serve for a term of three years. This initiative serves as a model for other countries around the world and it should be supported by the new Government. It would also be worthwhile for the National Special Rapporteur to play a role on the National Council for Food Security and the "Zero Hunger" programme.

56. The Special Rapporteur will continue to monitor positive developments on the right to food in Brazil. He also urges the international community, in particular the international financial institutions, to support President da Silva's programme. In particular, the financial institutions should ensure that the repayment conditions of Brazil's excessive external debt of US$ 235 billion do not prevent the implementation of this programme. In a country as wealthy and productive as Brazil, the "Zero Hunger" programme must be implemented to ensure that hunger is not allowed to persist. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes that human rights obligations have primacy over all other obligations, including those concluded under international trade agreements or debt repayment agreements.

B. Sierra Leone

57. Sierra Leone, a country devastated by war over the last 10 years, is finally moving towards peace and has made an important commitment to realizing the right to food. As part of efforts to rebuild Sierra Leone, the Government is placing vital emphasis on ensuring the right to food and food security, an effort that should be fully supported by the international community. President Kabbah, in his inaugural re-election address in 2002, made this very clear:

> "Fellow Sierra Leoneans, my own principal objective in the second leg of our journey together is centred on a basic right — the right to food. So today, with the new mandate you have given me, I shall make another pledge. This time, I pledge to work even harder, and with greater resolve, to do everything in my power to ensure that within the next five years, no Sierra Leonean should go to bed hungry."

58. Realizing the right to food must be a priority in Sierra Leone. Before the war, it was estimated in 1990 that more than 80 per cent of Sierra Leoneans lived below the poverty line of US$ 1 per day, and the average income of the poor was not enough to cover even 50 per cent of their minimum household food requirements. Today, as a result of the war, the poverty level has deepened and malnutrition levels continue to be extremely high, as do child and maternal mortality levels.[35]

59. The war in Sierra Leone was also characterized by very serious violations of human rights. Many of the human rights violations during the conflict were clear violations of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to food, for example, systematic looting and destruction of farms, crops and livestock, and the forcible displacement of people from their homes, farms and sources of livelihood. The RUF (Revolutionary United Front) amputated the hands and feet of civilians, severely limiting their ability to feed themselves not only in the short term, but for the rest of their lives. These are clear violations of the right to food, just as the deliberate destruction of schools and health posts in many regions is a clear violation of the rights to education and health.

60. In May 2003, the Government of Sierra Leone, in collaboration with FAO, held a symposium in Freetown on "Operationalizing the right to food in Sierra Leone", which was attended by a representative of the Special Rapporteur. This symposium was an important first step in making progress on the President's pledge by developing a greater understanding of the right to food in Sierra Leone. The following preliminary recommendations are made to the Government:

(a) A national food security secretariat should be set up under the Ministry of Agriculture to determine a policy and plan of action to ensure the right to food for all Sierra Leoneans by the year 2007;

(b) The plan of action should address a number of issues, including discrimination against women, access to land and credit, food standards and appropriate use of food aid;

(c) An independent monitoring mechanism (in line with the Paris Principles) should be instituted to monitor the progressive realization of the right to food, monitor violations of the right to food and receive complaints and grievances. It would also be empowered to seek redress for violations of the right to food.

61. The Special Rapporteur welcomes these positive steps in Sierra Leone towards realizing the right to food. Many challenges face Sierra Leone in turning the President's pledge into concrete action, but an important step has been taken. Sierra Leone is a country rich in resources — diamonds, gold, and fertile soil — but these resources must be harnessed for food security to be attained, and support from the international community will clearly be necessary. The Special Rapporteur will continue to monitor developments in Sierra Leone and he urges the international community to work with the Government of Sierra Leone to realize the right to food.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

62. **The Special Rapporteur urges Governments to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food in accordance with their human rights obligations. It is clear that despite advances made in improving the legal protection of the right to food, particularly for women, much work remains to be done to reduce the gap between advocated norms and reality. Gender discrimination persists in a variety of forms that have profound effects on the right to food of women. Similarly, the activities of transnational corporations can now have profound effects on the right to food. The growing power of transnational corporations and their extension of power through privatization, deregulation and the rolling back of the State also mean that it is now time to develop binding legal norms that hold corporations to human rights standards and circumscribe potential abuses of their position of power.**

63. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that:**

(a) **All Governments take immediate action to address discrimination against women, particularly where this contributes to the malnutrition of women and girls. Social traditions that proscribe that women should eat last should be understood as a form of violence against women, particularly as this contributes to high rates of female mortality in certain regions of the world;**

(b) **All Governments should improve the enforcement and implementation of existing legislation developed to protect women. This must include respecting women's right to food and ensuring that women have equal access to resources, including income, land and water, to enable them to feed themselves;**

(c) **Governments should also take concrete action to improve the conditions of women to ensure that legal equality is transformed into substantive equality, taking note of the different starting points of men and women;**

(d) **The international financial institutions should review programmes of economic restructuring to examine their gender-differentiated effects, recognizing the important role that the State must play in reducing inequality;**

(e) **Governments should also regulate transnational corporations and their activities in the food system with a view to implementing their obligation to protect their citizens and those in other countries. Governments should also implement the Norms on the responsibilities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises with regard to human rights by using them as a**

model for developing legislation and administrative provisions for corporations, and national courts should determine responsibility in the case of violations of the right to food;

(f) Transnational corporations should respect international human rights obligations, intergovernmental agreements and national legislation with respect to food security, food standards and the right to food. They should encourage independent monitoring of their activities, particularly with respect to voluntary codes of conduct to which they have committed themselves;

(g) Appropriate judicial and administrative remedies should be established for violations of the right to food, including violations committed by private actors against women and by transnational corporations;

(h) Governments should take note of the positive examples provided in different countries with respect to the right to food, notably the commitment and actions of the Governments of Brazil and Sierra Leone. They should also contribute actively and positively to the development of international initiatives, such as the voluntary guidelines on the right to food.

To die from hunger in a world of plenty is an outrage and a crime. The silent daily massacre of tens of thousands of victims of hunger on this planet must be stopped.

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[22] Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Velasquez Rodriguez v. Honduras* (1989): European Court of Human Rights, *Guerra v. Italy* (1998); Human Rights Committee, *Kitok v. Sweden* (1985).

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[28] Litigation against Broken Hill Proprietary by people living around the Ok Tedi River in Papua New Guinea.

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[30] *Sithole and others, Thor Chemicals Holdings Ltd. and others* (1999, 2000).

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United Nations A/58/331

General Assembly

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Fifty-eighth session
Item 117 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Elimination of racism and racial discrimination: comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Note by the Secretary-General

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/195, paragraph 53, the Secretary-General was requested to submit a report on the implementation of the present resolution to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

2. In this regard, reference is being made to the following four reports that are submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, which cover the different sections of the aforementioned resolution:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the status of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (A/58/__);

(b) Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/266 (see A/58/324);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1993-2003) Third Decade pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/195 (A/58/80-E/2003/71);

(d) Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/195 (see A/58/313).

* A/58/150.

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Fifty-eighth session
Item 41 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Optimizing the international effort to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/109, regarding the strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly, at its fifty-eighth session a report containing a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the resolution, and to make proposals for innovative measures to enhance the effectiveness of the international community's response to the Chernobyl disaster. The report presents the activities undertaken by the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations to optimize the international humanitarian response to the Chernobyl disaster during the reporting period.

Despite the fact that 17 years that have passed since the accident, the situation in and around Chernobyl and the contaminated areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine remains difficult. The scientific data, as well as anecdotal information, indicate that this problem continues to affect a vast number of people, including children, in the three most affected States. Their future prospects and well-being have been profoundly influenced by decisions that they were able neither to influence nor control.

* A/58/150.

** The submission of the report was delayed because of the need for further consultations.

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I. General situation

1. The Chernobyl disaster of April 1986 resulted in large-scale displacement of populations and contamination of vast areas of land. The loss of livelihood and the trauma suffered by the people because of the severing of their links with their native soil and their patrimony was a great human tragedy.

2. The situation in the three most affected States was described in the report of 8 October 2001 (A/56/447, paras. 4-7), which provides a succinct and accurate picture of the extent of the problem for Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine even today. Reports of the Governments of the three affected States regarding their efforts to overcome the consequences of the catastrophe are annexed to the present report.

II. Implementing the recommendations of the report "The Human Consequences of the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident: A Strategy for Recovery"

3. A multidisciplinary international inter-agency mission studied the human consequences of Chernobyl, 15 years after the accident, as part of a fresh assessment of the situation by the United Nations. The mission's report, "The Human Consequences of the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident: A Strategy for Recovery", was launched in New York in February 2002. It made several recommendations for recovery and sustainable development. The suggested strategy encompassed health, economic, social and environmental initiatives and a continuation of research into the disaster in order to ensure that resources are directed to those most in need, while also encouraging and enabling the majority of the people affected to attain self-sufficiency. The report also recommended that special attention be accorded to the direct victims of the accident and those afflicted with thyroid cancer. The findings of the report were covered at length in A/56/447, paragraphs 8 to 12.

4. In order to promote the new strategy for recovery with government agencies and international donors, and to help initiate the implementation of the recommendations of this strategy, the United Nations Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl undertook a second visit to the region in April 2002. High-level officials in all three countries expressed their support for the new United Nations strategy and their readiness to work closely with the international community in its implementation. There was implicit agreement that this shift in the focus of international assistance could best be achieved through a nationally driven process for the creation of domestic conditions for sustainable economic activity. This implies a change in their policies and programmes and a greater focus on assistance to the victims of the disaster.

5. The implementation of the recommendations of the report has been initiated through a concerted effort to reinvigorate cooperation between the organizations of the United Nations system, and to catalyse and facilitate cooperation with the World Bank, the European Commission and interested donors.

6. At the field level, a number of concrete actions were taken by the United Nations country teams in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. These included:

(a) Renewed policy dialogue with concerned government agencies on macro and sectoral policy issues related to the implementation of the strategy;

(b) Enhancing the integration of United Nations activities with local and national government initiatives;

(c) Strengthening local partnerships with donors and related resource mobilization.

7. The disbursement of modest sums of seed money from the United Nations Chernobyl Trust Fund was authorized for three pilot projects ($80,000 per project). These projects, prepared by the United Nations country teams in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, aim to support socio-economic rehabilitation and to improve the health of the people in the region.

8. Another key recommendation of the report was implemented with the launch of the International Chernobyl Research and Information Network (ICRIN) in June 2003. The objective of ICRIN is to support the ongoing international, national and civil society efforts for the sustainable development of the affected regions by compiling, consolidating and coordinating scientific research, commissioning further research where required, and ensuring its effective dissemination to all stakeholders. The first phase of the Network's plan is now being implemented.

III. Ongoing international assistance efforts[1]

9. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) established the Chernobyl Forum as a contribution to the United Nations strategy report. The Forum's mandate is to review and reconcile the scientific research related to the environmental and health consequences of the Chernobyl accident and to make the results of the review available to the international community. The members of the Chernobyl Forum are drawn from organizations within the United Nations system — IAEA, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank — as well as representatives of the three most affected States. Recognized radiological specialists will hold a series of expert meetings to carry out the Forum's mandate. The Forum's findings and recommendations will be widely disseminated via public information specialists, the activities of ICRIN and an international conference to be convened by the Chernobyl Forum in 2005.

10. The IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme has also earmarked resources for the mitigation of the consequences of the Chernobyl accident within the affected communities. Among its various efforts is the Seeds of Hope project, which is run with the support of the FAO/IAEA Agriculture and Biotechnology Laboratory. It has helped farmers in Belarus to cultivate rapeseed on contaminated land, allowing the population to benefit from products derived from the crop, such as edible rapeseed

[1] A comprehensive database covering the overall assistance and research activities of the funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system and of its main partners in the framework of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl in the course of the 12 years that the issue has been on the agenda of the General Assembly will be posted on the newly revamped United Nations Chernobyl web page; see paragraph 27 below.

oil. Through the Technical Cooperation Programme, the Agency is also assisting the Government of Ukraine in the management of the radioactive waste associated with the shelter at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and in drawing up plans for decommissioning the plant.

11. WHO completed its inventory of research done on health effects of the Chernobyl accident. The main objective of this project was background preparation for a series of meetings of an expert group on health within the framework of Chernobyl Forum initiative. The expert group will identify gaps in knowledge and provide advice on future research directions for health risk studies and special health-care programmes for the rehabilitation of populations affected by Chernobyl. In 2002-2003, WHO continued its work on two major projects: the telemedicine project, funded largely through private donations from the Sasakawa Memorial Health Foundation (SMHF) of Japan, and the tissue bank project, which is also supported by SMHF, in partnership with the European Community and the National Cancer Institute of the United States of America. WHO continues to encourage the involvement of non-governmental organizations in Chernobyl-related activities and makes its expertise available through its membership of the ICRIN Steering Group. It also serves as a focal point for the ICRIN Scientific Board. In June 2003, the International Conference on Chernobyl Children — Health Effects and Psychosocial Rehabilitation was held in Kyiv in collaboration with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP, WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It discussed the results of the national programmes and international research projects on child/adolescent health. The initiative for the conference came from the Ukrainian non-governmental organization Chernobyl Doctors, as part of the United Nations strategy for recovery.

12. FAO continues to work through its joint programme with IAEA to reduce the radiological impact on the population because of the consumption of contaminated food and to support the development of agriculture in the affected regions. A current project is expected to demonstrate that radiologically safe flour can be produced, through appropriate production and processing technologies, from wheat grown on contaminated land. Such projects can provide the basis for further economic development of the affected region.

13. The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation is the only body specifically mandated by the General Assembly to scientifically assess sources and effects of ionizing radiation. The Committee, in close collaboration with scientists from the three most affected countries, is continuing and extending the examination of exposure and other effects of the Chernobyl accident that had been covered in its 2000 report. So far, the additional information corroborates the conclusion of the 2000 report, namely, that the vast majority of the population need not live in fear of serious health consequences due to radiation or radionuclides from the Chernobyl accident. The next Scientific Committee report on Chernobyl is expected in 2006. It will present the results of epidemiological studies of health and will be divided into two categories — ecological or descriptive studies and analytical epidemiological studies.

14. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization had been instrumental in the creation and development of the community centres for social and psychological rehabilitation in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. It has been actively involved in providing assistance in the area of post-disaster

education and information. The organization promotes the implementation of a preventive education programme that includes education concerning the risks of nuclear contamination. The programme covers the training of students, teachers and parents with a view to managing the contaminated environment; provides opportunities for learning and practising preventive behaviour; and collects information on prevention for dissemination to the general public.

15. United Nations country teams are working in each country to implement the recommendations of the United Nations report for supporting long-term sustainable development in the Chernobyl region.

16. In Belarus the United Nations office has worked over the past year to coordinate dialogue on Chernobyl among the Government, international non-governmental organizations and donors with the goal of establishing development initiatives that effectively meet local recovery needs. Based on these efforts, two initiatives are planned. The first is a pilot programme for integrated development in four affected areas of the country. Called Cooperation for Rehabilitation (CORE), the programme will be supported directly by UNDP and national and international partners, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. It will dovetail with UNDP participatory community development initiatives in Ukraine, as well as with a planned World Bank project aimed at local development initiatives and environmental security. UNICEF is developing a partnership with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to introduce life skills into the school curriculum. This project will help young people in Belarus better cope with the social, economic and health problems in Chernobyl-affected areas.

17. United Nations support for the Russian Federation is focused on environmental recovery, regional economic development and youth development. Following a UNDP project to evaluate water quality in the Bryansk oblast, UNDP and the Government have developed a proposal for a second-phase initiative designed to establish practical water safety measures and improve the water supply in Chernobyl-affected territories. With support from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP recently launched a project to support economic development in Chernobyl-affected areas of the oblast. Also, UNICEF has developed a proposal for youth-friendly services in Chernobyl-affected areas and plans to replicate its successful experiences in addressing youth problems from other areas of Russia.

18. The United Nations assistance in Ukraine is primarily delivered through the UNDP Chernobyl Recovery and Development Programme. Supported by UNDP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and SDC, the Programme provides policy advice and development support to the Government at the national, regional and local levels and promotes participatory community development initiatives. Activities include analysing current human development conditions in affected areas, providing impact assessments of current policies and programmes and promoting collaborative recovery strategies. The participatory community development component works directly with local people living in 26 villages in 10 Chernobyl-affected districts and supports the formation of their community organizations. Community organizations implement their own village development projects, in cooperation with local government institutions, by mobilizing local

resources in addition to small grants, which can be up to 40 per cent of a project's total cost.

19. The World Bank is actively involved in efforts to rehabilitate the economies of the region and is currently preparing a new post-Chernobyl recovery project for Belarus. The project would enable rural populations in the three countries living in the districts most affected by the Chernobyl accident to develop better living conditions, including safer and more sustainable livelihoods.

20. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies initiated the Chernobyl Humanitarian Assistance and Rehabilitation Programme in 1990. It provides radiological diagnostic screening for the population in order to detect thyroid abnormalities at an early stage. Since the start of the programme, over 500,000 persons have been screened and given emergency health care. In 2002, over 91,000 persons were examined. The Programme was redesigned in May 2002, to better focus on evolving assistance requirements and to take into account the lack of government resources to fully assist people in the contaminated areas. The main recommendation of the Programme continues to be to focus on screening for thyroid cancer (palpation and ultrasound) in areas that are now highly contaminated among the priority target groups of individuals who were 0 to 18 years old at the time of the accident (born between 1967 and 1987). Basic health-care support is no longer provided, except in emergency cases. The programme aims to ensure improved follow-up for the individuals with abnormal thyroid scans, including free transportation to the diagnostic centres for further investigation and treatment.

21. The European Commission has allocated significant resources for the study and mitigation of the health and environmental consequences of the accident, including funds for research and development activities and assistance projects provided through programmes of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office and the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States. The European Union is also involved in efforts to transform the employment pattern of Slavutich (Ukraine) and Gomel (Belarus) from mono-industrial centres dependent on the Chernobyl plant to more diverse economies. In addition, the social and economic regeneration of contaminated areas in Belarus is being addressed by the CORE programme, an international effort involving the European Union, several European Union countries, non-governmental organizations, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and UNDP.

22. In 1995, the G-7 countries, the European Commission and Ukraine signed a memorandum of understanding that established grants and loans as assistance to Ukraine for enhancing nuclear safety and mitigating the impact of the closure of the last operating Chernobyl reactor in 2000 on the energy sector, as well as in social and economic fields. This cooperation continues to provide considerable support for safety, restructuring of the energy sector, investments and social programmes administered by EBRD. Notable examples include the Chernobyl Shelter Fund (CSF) and the Nuclear Safety Account (NSA), which support ongoing measures to stabilize the existing Chernobyl Unit 4 sarcophagus; to construct a new, stable, and environmentally safe structure that will contain the remains of the reactor for at least 100 years; and to improve the short- and long-term safety of Chernobyl facilities in general.

23. The United States of America remains engaged in efforts to ameliorate the environmental, economic, and social consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. It is a

major contributor to CSF, NSA, and other bilateral assistance programmes. In 2002, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) completed its Chernobyl Childhood Illness programme. As a result of that effort, over 110,000 children were screened for early thyroid cancer, of whom 8 per cent were found to have thyroid abnormalities, 1.6 per cent had pre-cancerous nodules and required further testing, and 9 had cancer. These children were also examined for psychosocial problems. Close to 14 per cent were found to be in need of assistance. USAID funding for this programme has now ended, and local authorities and non-governmental organizations are providing psychosocial assistance and additional testing and treatment.

24. In order to strengthen the coordination of ongoing national and international efforts, national and international non-governmental organizations, other grass-roots entities and international organizations outside of the United Nations family are invited to participate in the ICRIN activities.

IV. Advocacy and public awareness

25. The Secretary-General visited Ukraine in June 2002. That first visit by a United Nations Secretary-General to the region affected by Chernobyl brought unique and incalculable advocacy value to the issue, providing a much-needed boost to the activities of the international community. It also helped to rekindle waning donor interest in the human dimensions of the Chernobyl problem. The Secretary-General's visit was the culmination of the momentum generated by the launch of the United Nations strategy report and by consultations held in the region by the United Nations Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl.

26. To draw attention to the "forgotten crisis" of the Chernobyl disaster, and in order to mobilize international assistance for humanitarian needs and long-term economic, social and environmental development efforts, the Swiss Government helped establish a web site, www.chernobyl.info. It is fully funded by Switzerland and was launched simultaneously in Geneva, Kyiv and Minsk in June 2002. Linked to the United Nations Chernobyl web site, it is intended to provide unbiased, reliable and continuous information on the effects of the disaster and the current situation in the affected areas.

27. The United Nations has initiated work on collating into a single database information on all the assistance and research projects that have been undertaken by all the members and standing invitees of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl. This will provide a clearer picture of what has been done, how much assistance has been provided and to which countries, etc., and will improve understanding of the problems that remain to be addressed and where collective and individual attention needs to be focused.

28. On the sixteenth and seventeenth anniversaries of the Chernobyl catastrophe, the Secretary-General issued statements calling on the international community not to forget those who continue to suffer the consequences of the disaster. On those occasions, various public events were organized at United Nations Headquarters, mainly by the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine and other international partners. Coinciding with the anniversaries, the annual International Conference on Health and Environment is organized by the non-

governmental organization World Information Transfer, the Government of Ukraine and UNICEF, in collaboration with other partners concerned.

V. Resource mobilization

29. In the context of the shift in policy on Chernobyl, and as part of the renewed efforts to bring assistance to the affected populations, the United Nations sees a clear need to energize work with donors. Despite efforts in various directions, more needs to be done to secure donor support in a systematic way. United Nations country teams are talking to donors in their respective countries, but this work needs to be invigorated and coordinated.

30. In the reporting period, efforts of the United Nations were focused on the following modalities for approaching donors:

(a) A large donor conference, as well as direct approaches to individual donors;

(b) Organizing donor field trips to the most affected areas of the three States;

(c) A dual approach (in donor capitals and in New York, as well as in the capitals of the three affected States).

31. The United Nations programmes aimed at addressing the human consequences of the Chernobyl disaster have been chronically underfunded for many years. Because of the constraints felt by some donors, Chernobyl falls into a budgetary gap. However, it would certainly be morally appropriate, and of great practical utility to the affected populations, if funds allocated by donors for international assistance efforts were commensurate with the funds being allocated by the same donors to nuclear safety problems around the now closed nuclear plant.

VI. Concluding observations

32. New momentum has been created by the recent initiatives of the international community. For this momentum to be sustained, however, substantial resources are needed. Though many donors have been generous with assistance over the years, it must be noted that some important projects have been discontinued and assistance suspended due to severe financial constraints. The humanitarian and development activities indicated in the present report are the minimum required to mitigate the serious human consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and to show solidarity with the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, which continue to carry a heavy burden because of the catastrophe. For the victims, Chernobyl is a personal and societal tragedy. For the rest of the world, Chernobyl represents a disaster whose consequences need to be eliminated and the recurrence of which should be prevented. Herein lies the enlightened self-interest of the international community and the test of its solidarity with those who continue to live with the effects of the worst disaster of its kind that the world has known.

Annex I

Report of the Government of Belarus

[Original: Russian]

Assessment of the radioecological, biomedical, economic and social consequences of the Chernobyl disaster shows that Belarus sustained irreparable damage. The contaminated area constitutes 21 per cent of its territory, and the number of people exposed to the effects of radiation is over 2 million (out of a population of around 9.9 million).

The State is making significant efforts to minimize the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. As a result of the measures adopted, a number of important problems have been solved. They include: establishment of a legal and regulatory basis for dealing with the consequences of the accident in a comprehensive manner; transfer of the population out of the most heavily contaminated districts and its resettlement in new places of residence; establishment of a radiation control and monitoring system; raising the level of medical treatment in the contaminated regions; and development of a social protection system for all categories of the affected population. Practical efforts to address the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster are being carried out in the framework of a special State programme financed from the budget. Currently, a State programme to address the consequences of the disaster is being carried out for 2001-2005 and for the period up to 2010.

The radioecological situation in Belarus is currently determined by the presence of long-lived isotopes, particularly caesium-137, strontium-90 and a number of trans-uranium elements. Analysis of radioactive contamination of Europe by Cs-137 shows that around 35 per cent of the contamination by that radionuclide as a result of fallout from Chernobyl occurred in the territory of Belarus. The radionuclides are present in virtually all ecosystem components and are involved in the geochemical and trophic migration cycles; this determines the multiplicity of pathways for external and internal irradiation of the population, creates additional risks to its health, and hampers the exploitation of natural resources.

Some 70 to 90 per cent of the Cs-137, 40 to 60 per cent of the Sr-90 and up to 95 per cent of the trans-uranium elements remains in the upper root-inhabited layer of the soil, which attests to the continuing danger of radioactive contamination of agricultural production and of food, fodder and medicinal crops. The State is compelled to support agriculture over a large swath of the affected territories; otherwise, there would be no way to solve the problem of employment for the population. Accordingly, significant resources are being expended on the implementation of protective measures. The quality of foods produced on private farms is a matter of serious concern.

From 1986 to 2001, there were 8,358 cases of thyroid cancer in Belarus, of which 716 occurred in children, 342 in adolescents and 7,300 in adults.

Changes are appearing in the incidence of breast cancer. From 1990 to 2000, disease indicators in the Gomel region grew by 16.7 per cent; the disease indicator increased by an average of 3.2 per cent per year. Among rural women, the growth in

the disease rate was 29.2 per cent, with an increase of 3.6 per cent per year; among urban women, the rates were 10.3 per cent and 2.8 per cent, respectively.

From the early 1980s to 1986, the birth rate in the Gomel region was 15.7 per 1,000; in the Mogilev region, it was 14.7 per 1,000. Following the Chernobyl accident (after 1987), the birth rate in these regions began to decline rapidly. The pace of decline slowed somewhat in the mid-1990s; in 2001, the birth rate in the contaminated territories fell by 40 per cent.

Moreover, in the 17 years that have elapsed since the accident, its consequences have not been fully liquidated, since they exceed the scope of the country's capacities. Minimizing and addressing the consequences of a disaster of such magnitude is an extremely difficult task requiring huge material and financial resources. It is therefore necessary to strengthen efforts at both the national and the international levels, in keeping not only with the scale of the damage, but also with the existence of invaluable experience in liquidating and addressing the biggest radiation disaster of the twentieth century.

The main tendency in the development of Chernobyl-related international cooperation at the current stage is a shift in its priorities — a transition from the provision of humanitarian assistance to long-term social and economic rehabilitation and ensuring stable development in the affected districts. The need for such a transition is spelled out in the report of the United Nations Mission, entitled "The Human Consequences of the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident: A Strategy for Recovery", and the World Bank report entitled "Belarus: Review of the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear accident and a programme for addressing them".

The Republic of Belarus attaches great significance to raising public awareness of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and the danger of radiation. The "Cooperation for rehabilitation" (CORE) programme, which includes projects for developing ecological education for the residents of the contaminated regions, is aimed at creating an effective information and education system for working with the affected population, beginning in primary school. Belarus is participating in the work of the International Chernobyl Research and Information Network. The Swiss-Belarusian-Ukrainian joint information project "Chernobyl Info", which has the status of an international information channel within the Network, is at the implementation stage. The Chernobyl Forum was created for the purpose of analysing the medical and ecological consequences of the disaster under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Note should be taken of the fact that Belarus was the first to begin developing a new generation of Chernobyl-related initiatives aimed at the stable development of the affected territories. A characteristic example of that initiative is the CORE programme, the active implementation phase of which began in 2003. The programme provides for a comprehensive and integrated solution to problems in the areas of health and environmental protection, economic development, dosimetry, radiation protection, cultural legacy, and education through the implementation of individual integrated projects. The CORE programme is unique in terms of its purposefulness, international support for the local population in the affected regions, and recruitment of that population for the purpose of defining and implementing specific CORE projects.

In order to attract additional resources for post-Chernobyl measures, the organs of State power are doing their utmost to cooperate with foreign charitable organizations in carrying out humanitarian actions and initiatives in Belarus.

The combined efforts of the entire international community are needed in order to formulate effective measures for preventing nuclear accidents, implement large-scale, comprehensive measures to address the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, build effective and long-term coordination within the international community around Chernobyl-related issues, and strengthen the comprehensive approach to rehabilitating contaminated territories.

An analysis of the situation with regard to addressing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster in Belarus leads to the following conclusions.

1. The Chernobyl disaster created a host of serious and long-lasting problems in Belarus affecting the vital interests of millions of people, in particular, their health, way of life, well-being and working conditions. The implementation of State programmes to address the consequences of the disaster shows that the resources allocated from the Belarusian budget are insufficient to solve these problems.

2. In addition to causing serious environmental harm, the Chernobyl disaster led to unprecedented irradiation of the population of Belarus and made it necessary to formulate and introduce a series of protective measures in order to limit the doses of external and internal irradiation. The radiation situation in a number of affected regions remains complicated to this day, and for this reason, it has not been possible to fully solve the problem of producing agricultural products which meet the existing radiation safety standards. There are districts in which the average annual effective doses of additional irradiation received by the population as a result of fallout from Chernobyl exceed 1 mSv, which, in accordance with national legislation, requires the implementation of further protective measures.

3. The radiation doses received by the population have led to a deterioration in the health of residents of the affected regions. The number of cases of radiation-induced thyroid cancer and exposure of the thyroid glands to iodine-131 is continuing to increase among children and adolescents. An increase in illness has been observed among the "liquidators" and the adult population. It is projected that 15,000 cases of thyroid cancer may develop among the inhabitants of Belarus over the 50 years following the accident.

4. Other stochastic effects of irradiation are not yet fully apparent because of the longer latency period and chronic nature of exposure to low doses of radiation. Reliable observation has been made of trends towards a growth in the incidence of oncologically significant illnesses in certain categories of victims exposed to higher doses. Prognoses indicate the possibility of an increase of several percentage points in the disease rate over the victims' lifetime. In order to identify the role of the radiation factor in the possible increase in oncological disease, it is necessary to conduct carefully planned, long-term radioepidemiological studies.

5. The medical consequences of the Chernobyl disaster are not limited to the radiological ones. The disaster allowed a significant portion of the population to form an inadequate perception of the radiation risk, which has led to persistent psychological discomfort. The complex influence of the radiation-related and non-radiation-related aspects of the Chernobyl disaster is leading to a deterioration in the

health of all categories of victims, which is reflected in an increase in non-oncological disease (illnesses of the endocrine system, cardiovascular disease, psychoneurological disturbances, etc.).

6. Adverse demographic trends are developing in the radioactively contaminated zones. A decline in the birth rate, increased mortality, and a decrease in the active population have been observed. This produces a knock-on effect: the above-mentioned factors, combined with the continuing departure of intellectuals and experts, are aggravating the employment- and health-related problems of the population in the affected regions.

7. The Chernobyl disaster created serious problems for the country's agro-industrial and timber sectors, which employ a significant portion of the population in the affected regions. The introduction of scientifically based systems for carrying out agricultural and timber activities led to a decrease in the production of contaminated products, although the problems are far from being wholly resolved. Ensuring the safety of economic activities in the contaminated territories requires continual investment in order to support the fertility of the soil, implement protective measures, and increase the competitiveness and profitability of production.

8. The complex radiation-related, social and economic rehabilitation of the contaminated territories is an issue of great importance in addressing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. In order to achieve the main goal of rehabilitation — real economic rebirth and stable development — there is a need to enhance national approaches and international assistance for the rehabilitation of the social infrastructure of the affected regions and the areas of dense settlement of the evacuated population. The task of creating attractive conditions for Belarusian and foreign investors is of the greatest urgency.

9. In view of the absence within the global community of a clear and unified strategy for conducting scientific research on the issues related to the Chernobyl disaster, and insufficient funding for national scientific programmes, there is a need to deepen international coordination and cooperation.

10. Overall, the perception by the international community of the existing problems related to the Chernobyl disaster is not fully adequate, given their real scale and significance. Despite the fact that 17 years have elapsed since the Chernobyl accident, we note the lack of unified methodologies for assessing the consequences of massive radiation releases and developing full-scale, comprehensive packages of measures to address them. This is a significant gap in the accident response system.

Annex II

Report of the Government of the Russian Federation

Implementation in the Russian Federation of General Assembly resolution 56/109 entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster"

[Original: Russian]

During the period from 2001 until the present day, work has continued in the Russian Federation with a view to overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl accident and on rehabilitating the contaminated areas and providing social assistance to the population. In accordance with the legislation in force in Russia and the special federal programme on this question, regular observations were made of the radioactive contamination of the lower stratum of the atmosphere and of bodies of water and soils in the areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster. Practical work was carried out to ascertain in more detail the contamination level in population centres and the surrounding environment.

During the past two years, after issuance of a report on this subject by the United Nations Secretary-General, the Russian Water Authority (Rosgidromet) made a detailed assessment of the radiological situation in the 300 most contaminated localities where over 3,000 samples were taken and analysed in order to check for caesium-137. A database is maintained on radiological contamination of the environment. It contains information on 12,500 communities and on more than 99,000 samples regarding their content of caesium-137, strontium-90 and plutonium-239 and -240. This information is used in assessing the annual and cumulative doses absorbed by the population in the period since the accident.

The weekly publication *The Radiological Situation in the Territories of Russia and Neighbouring States* contains information on the status and evolution of radioactive contamination in the territories affected by the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. This information is brought to the attention of the relevant ministries and departments of the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

At the present time, more than 4,000 communities (4,342) in 14 constituent parts of the Russian Federation with a total population of 1,792,207 are in the area of radioactive contamination. In the period 2001-2002, on instructions from the federal Government, the Russian Ministry of Health assessed the current annual doses absorbed by the population living in the contaminated area and the total cumulative doses for the period since the accident. Estimates were made of the effective average annual doses of radiation absorbed by the inhabitants of 4,438 populated areas, on the basis of which the following conclusions may be drawn:

In 2001, the population of 12 constituent parts of the Russian Federation (excluding the Bryansk and Kaluzhsk regions) did not receive effective average annual doses of radiation above the prescribed limit of 1 milliSievert (mSv).

In 2001, the inhabitants of one community in the Kaluzhsk region and 445 communities in the Bryansk region received an effective average annual radiation

dose of over 1 mSv (the inhabitants of 128 of them are no longer living there). The inhabitants of 55 of those communities received average annual doses of over 5 mSv (in 31 of them, there are no inhabitants). In addition, in one community in the Kaluzhsk region, 61 people received doses exceeding 1 mSv.

Calculations were made of the radiation exposure of the thyroid gland of people living in the contaminated areas of the Bryansk, Kaluzhsk, Orlovsk, Tulsk, Lipetsk and Ryazansk regions, drawing on the expertise the Russian Scientific Commission on Radiological Protection. Those with the highest exposure of the thyroid gland were children at the time of the accident. Radiological exposure of the thyroid exceeding levels of the critical group (1 gray) were noted in 141 communities of the Bryansk region.

The results of the calculations indicated that, in the communities of the Bryansk, Kaluzhsk, Tulsk, Orlovsk, Lipetsk and Ryazansk regions, the effective average cumulative doses varied from a single milliSievert up to hundreds of milliSieverts. The highest observed level — 410 mSv — was among children of under one year of age at the time of the accident in Zaborye, in the Krasnogorsk district of the Bryansk region.

The number of communities in which the effective average cumulative dose received by various age groups between 1986 and 2001 equals or exceeds 70 mSv ranges from 88 to 260. These are only in the Bryansk region.

It should be noted that the effective dose continues to accumulate in the communities. Radiation projections suggest that the number of communities exposed to radiation will grow over time. According to a preliminary projection, the number of communities with effective cumulative doses exceeding 70 mSv may reach 350 by the year 2056 in the Bryansk region. In other regions, a preliminary projection indicates no increased cumulative dose over a 70-year lifespan following the accident. More detailed research is needed, however.

With a view to assessing the medical consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, the Russian National Medical and Dosimetric Register was set up in 1986 within the Ministry of Health and has been functioning ever since.

Demographic and morbidity indicators in the contaminated regions are worsening overall and reflect general trends taking place in recent years in the Russian Federation. These indicators are affected by various influences, including social factors. The stochastic effects of radiation include oncological morbidity and congenital disorders.

For a further appraisal of the effect of the radiological factor on the health of the population, medical observations and epidemiological research must be continued. The period of 17 years that has elapsed since the accident has not been enough to arrive at definitive conclusions. The Medical and Dosimetric Register must continue to be maintained.

The continuing high levels of radioactive contamination of agricultural lands and the low rates of reduction of radionuclides in the soil and farm produce necessitate a range of rehabilitation measures with a view to reducing the entry of radionuclides into the human food chain via the soil and agricultural products.

Following special measures taken in the agro-industrial sector, farm output with radiation levels exceeding the prescribed limits has diminished: from 86 per cent to 12 per cent in the case of milk, from 15.2 per cent to 3 per cent for meat, and from 78 per cent to under 0.01 per cent for grain. Nevertheless, in order to solve fully the problem of rehabilitating contaminated lands, considerable funds and time are still required.

The work of overcoming the effects of the radiation accident is proceeding along three tracks:

First: Special agrochemical procedures, including the application of lime, phosphorites and increased amounts of potassium fertilizers, are being followed. In general, these measures depend on budgetary funds allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture under the special federal programme for increasing the soil fertility in Russia. The cost of this programme totals 47 million roubles, or almost one third of the amount allocated for agrochemical improvement of lands in the Russian Federation as a whole. In addition, 30 million roubles were allocated in the current year for increased applications of potassium fertilizers, which is a very effective method of minimizing the effects of the radiation accident in agriculture.

Second: Attention is given to the output of "clean" fodder and livestock products as part of the special federal programme for overcoming the consequences of the radiation accident in the period up to 2010. The Russian Ministry of Finance has allocated 5.4 million roubles in the current year for implementation of this programme.

Third: Foodstuffs are being produced with curative and protective properties. Until the current year, this came under the special federal programme for children of Chernobyl, and from 2003 under the programme for overcoming the consequences of the radiation accident in the period up to 2010. Beta carotene, "premix 730/4" and iodocasein are used as food supplements. Each year, between 1.5 million and 1.7 million roubles are allocated for the production of foodstuffs with curative and protective properties for children, and for the purchase of such products. Vitamin-enriched foods are supplied to schools, children's homes, hospitals, sanatoriums and kindergartens, with children as the main target.

There is heightened interest in the production of such foods. This calls for expanding the network of enterprises producing vitamin-enriched foods. Such action has become possible to some extent, now that the Russian-Belarusian programme of joint activities to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster in the context of the Union Government for the period 2002-2005 has gone into operation.

In order to satisfy more fully the people's need for the above-mentioned products and to significantly lower contamination levels in such products, as well as to enhance their shelf life, humanitarian aid is needed for the provision of the following equipment:

- Equipment for the manufacture of sausage products enriched with vitamins and possessing curative and protective properties;
- Installations for bottling vitamin-enriched milk, bifidokefir and "bifilaif" in a container that would have a longer shelf life and higher quality, and enabling a substantial increase in the volume of output;

- Equipment with a sterilizer for aseptic bottling of juices, with an output capacity of four tons per hour;
- Mobile radiological laboratories to monitor the radiological situation in agricultural lands and in the output of livestock products.

Measures are under way for the social support of citizens living in contaminated areas. The State allocates substantial funds to solve Chernobyl-related problems. In the period 2001-2002, resource allocation for State rehabilitation programmes amounted to more than $12 million. Significant changes have been made in federal legislation governing the payment of compensation for the disabilities of Chernobyl invalids and the provision of benefits to the inhabitants in regions exposed to radiation. Among other measures, fixed amounts of compensation to invalids have been introduced, depending on the category of invalidity, enabling 70 per cent of Chernobyl invalids to receive substantial increases. The total amount of such compensation payments was raised 2.3 times over three years (from 780 million roubles in 2000 to 1,812 million roubles in 2003).

Additional benefits have been introduced, including payment of compensation to members of families for the death of the breadwinner caused by radiological illness after having participated in efforts to combat the consequences of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

As at 1 June 2003, the Act of the Russian Federation for the social protection of citizens exposed to radiation caused by the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant covers 1.9 million people. These include 1.7 million living in areas contaminated by the Chernobyl disaster and 200,000 people who took part in clean-up efforts, including 50,369 invalids and 4,074 families that lost their breadwinner. It should be noted that the volume of financing does not permit development of an adequate physical and technical infrastructure; consequently, public health institutions are short of medical technology such as low-dose x-ray, ultrasound, endoscopic and other laboratory equipment.

In order to expand the scope of specialized assistance to children with diagnosed thyroid disorders, diagnostic ultrasound equipment was provided by WHO to the Medical and Scientific Radiological Centre in Obninsk under the medical assistance programme for 2001-2002. In addition, during the past two years, WHO and IAEA provided assistance to Russian scientists in the study of the dynamics of radioactive contamination of water bodies in the Bryansk region, and also arranged for the purchase of food supplements.

Under the joint programme of the Russian-Belarusian Union Government to overcome the effects of the accident, an additional sum of approximately $11 million was provided to areas in the Russian Federation.

Measures for the economic rehabilitation of affected regions are the most financially demanding. State assistance is aimed primarily at the reconstruction and development of infrastructure and the social sector. In 2002, a sum of 400,000 roubles was allocated from the programme to provide 5,600 people with medical assistance, including 800 hospital in-patients. Furthermore, considerable aid is given by the Centre for Radiation Protection of the Scientific Research Institute for Paediatry and Paediatric Surgery of the Russian Ministry of Health.

Market mechanisms in the contaminated areas are still poorly developed. To rectify this, assistance has been provided in recent years by the European Commission. In 2001, under the programme of technical assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States and Georgia (TACIS), a small sum (90,000 euros) was allocated to three of the most contaminated communities in the Bryansk region with a view to stimulating enterprise and local initiative. This year, UNDP allocated $80,000 to agricultural producers in the Bryansk region for the dissemination of positive lessons learned by farmers in contaminated areas of the Orlovsk region.

In the Russian Federation, humanitarian aid is currently regulated by the federal act on voluntary aid (assistance) and the amendments and addenda to individual legislative acts of the Russian Federation on taxes and the establishment of advantageous contributions to State extrabudgetary funds in connection with the provision of voluntary aid (assistance) of the Russian Federation, and the resolution of the federal Government approving the procedure for the granting of humanitarian aid (assistance).

Under the legislation in force, the federal commission on international humanitarian aid coordinates the activities of organs, organizations and individuals at the federal level concerning the receipt and distribution of humanitarian aid granted to the Russian Federation. The commission takes day-to-day decisions on the approval of funds, goods, work and services in the context of humanitarian aid on the basis of documents submitted by Russian aid recipients. Attestation as to whether the funds, goods, work and services are part of humanitarian aid depends on the commission's decision and remains valid for one year.

The above-mentioned procedure ensures unhindered transit of humanitarian aid across the frontier. Over the past two years, the commission has received no complaints from non-governmental organizations regarding obstacles to goods clearance through customs.

Annex III

Report of the Government of Ukraine

Report of the information on the implementation in Ukraine of General Assembly resolution 56/109 on strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

[Original: Russian]

Seventeen years have passed since the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station, an event which has gone down in history as a sad and tragic milestone in twentieth century progress in science and technology. It was an unprecedented industrial and environmental disaster, and its epicentre was in Ukraine.

Although Ukraine invested a great deal of effort and resources in tackling the after-effects of the disaster, it still left an extraordinary range of immediate consequences. Ukraine has been funding such efforts on its own for the past 10 years, devoting to them between 5 and 7 per cent of overall government expenditure, or approximately $6.5 billion between 1991 and 2002.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, the immediate tasks were to bring radioactivity under control and shield the public from it. Now, however, radioactivity levels can reliably be said to be stabilized; they are checked by the monitoring system of the Ministry of Emergencies and Protection of the Population from the Consequences of the Chernobyl Catastrophe, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and the radiological departments of various institutes and organizations.

The Government's activities have been and remain focused on people, and all action to tackle the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster is aimed at protecting the population. There are three main directions: social action, medical action and radiation protection.

Social security

Social security policy for those suffering the effects of the Chernobyl disaster is based on the following principles: (1) a focus on the life and health of those individuals; (2) a comprehensive approach to health care, social policy and use of contaminated land, based on the appropriate national programmes and taking account of other areas of economic and social policy and progress in science and environmental protection; (3) provision of social security and full coverage of the costs incurred by those suffering the effects of the disaster; (4) using economic methods to improve living standards through preferential taxation rates for those suffering the effects of the disaster and associations of such individuals; (5) retraining and improving the qualifications of those affected by the disaster; (6) coordination of the activities of State bodies, institutions and organizations and civil society associations which look after various aspects of social security for the victims, cooperation between State organizations and victims (or their representatives) and coordination between social groups when social security decisions are taken at local or national level; and (7) international cooperation in

health care, social security, radiation protection, job security and use of international experience in organizing action on those issues.

Modern information technology has been pressed into use to handle social security issues mainly through the establishment of a database of all categories of victims. Its main aim is to give central and local authorities information on their movements and the state of their medical, social and radiation protection. It is now 94 per cent complete, with 2,878,952 individuals registered.

In recent years Ukraine has seen an increase in disabilities connected with the Chernobyl disaster. In 1991, there were around 2,000 individuals with such disabilities, but their number had risen to 99,177 by 1 January 2003. Because these individuals receive the highest level of social security, expenditure from the budget on their benefits is increasing significantly.

Medical care

The law on the status and social protection of Chernobyl disaster victims focuses on preserving and restoring the health of those victims. It provides for an annual medical examination, spa treatment and the establishment of centres for monitoring, treatment, social and psychological rehabilitation and career counselling.

Long-term medical care for victims is provided by a network of specialist centres, dispensaries and other medical institutions and departments (36 scientific and clinical institutions with higher accreditation and 77 central district hospitals and over 300 health-care institutions in the contaminated areas).

A State register is being set up to monitor the health of the victims and study the disaster's direct and indirect medical effects. Information has been collected on 1,855,060 individuals.

Since 1994, medical care for the affected population has been provided in accordance with an annual programme of measures for comprehensive health and medical facilities for the victims of the Chernobyl disaster. The programme aims (1) to provide the seriously ill with treatment at specialized health centres and clinics; (2) to help to protect mothers and children, improve the demographic situation in areas affected by the disaster, to develop the system of primary and secondary screening for diseases connected with the disaster by improving the medical/genetic service; (3) to support the operation of expert assessments for establishing causal relationships between illnesses, handicaps and deaths and the effects of the Chernobyl disaster; (4) to improve equipment for treatment and diagnostic facilities of medical institutions; (5) to acquire medicines, consumable medical supplies and reagents for specialized health centres, departments, clinical laboratories and other establishments; (6) to lend scientific support, conduct research and development activities, ensure that treatment centres absorb scientific advances and provide treatment for victims; (7) to provide social and psychological support and rehabilitation; and (8) to work on the development and operation of the medical sub-register attached to the State register of victims of the disaster.

There are five centres providing social and psychological support and information on ways to counter the effects of the Chernobyl disaster for the population of the Zhytomir and Kyiv regions.

In September 2002, the Ministry of Emergencies and UNDP extended their existing operation by launching a third phase, for 2002 to 2005, of the Chernobyl Recovery Programme. Assistance will be concentrated at region and district level. The aim of the project is to revive the areas around Chernobyl and increase the social vitality and accountability of the population of agricultural regions.

The radiological situation in contaminated areas and protection of the population

Radioactive contamination of land following the Chernobyl disaster added to the sources of long-term ionizing radiation in the environment and thus increased human exposure.

In 1991, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted a concept of population residence in the territories of Ukraine with increased levels of radioactive contamination as a result of the Chernobyl accident. It was used as a basis for post-Chernobyl legislation for radiation protection.

Between 1991 and 1995, on the basis of the legislation in force, the area of radioactive contamination was mapped out. It included 2,293 communities across 12 regions which had been most seriously contaminated as a result of the accident. The current population of the contaminated area (74 districts, 12 regions) is almost 2.3 million, over 1.6 million of whom are in the area under the closest radiological and environmental monitoring.

A key aspect of the Government's policy to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster involves a set of measures for comprehensive protection of the population and the creation of safe living conditions in the contaminated areas. As a basis for planning, it is necessary to conduct an objective assessment of radio-ecological conditions for residence and to draft the appropriate standard-setting legislation.

Dosimetry monitoring plays a key role, and consists of certification of communities through dosimetry, including thyroid dosimetry, and determining internal doses of radiation according to data from direct measurement of radio-caesium levels in the human body. Thyroid dosimetry certification makes it possible to identify adults and children at high risk from iodine isotope irradiation of the thyroid, in order to prevent disease and provide assistance. Thyroid-dosimetry certification was carried out for all populated areas between 1992 and 1999. Because the results of the 1992-1995 certification were in need of revision, in 2000 direct thyroid activity readings were analysed and the methods of retrospective reconstruction of irradiation levels were refined.

Since 1991, the regional offices of the Ministry of Health have carried out dosimetry certification of around 2,160 settlements in the contaminated areas The results are published in digests of overall dosimetry certification for populated areas throughout Ukraine. Since 1995, mass measurements of absorbed radio-caesium content for inhabitants of the contaminated areas have been conducted. The figures obtained, taken together with the results of dosimetry certification, provide the basis for programmes of countermeasures for agro-industry. In a climate of shortage of funds, they also allow assistance to be targeted more precisely and the effectiveness of existing measures to be assessed.

The network of radiation-monitoring points plays an important role in preventing additional irradiation. The laboratories and posts of seven ministries and

departments perform a wide-ranging programme of radiation monitoring of food products at all stages of production.

An important consideration is making countermeasures part of agriculture and forestry activities, in order to prevent radionuclides from entering the food chain (soil-plant-animal-human). The contaminated land in Ukraine still has 55 State forestry companies, employing over 36,000 people.

Options for the international community to help with issues connected with Chernobyl in the future

1. If the existing problems are to be addressed, Chernobyl-related issues must be kept on the agenda of the General Assembly, and cooperation between Ukraine and the United Nations and specialized agencies working in this field must be expanded.

2. As the central policy and coordinating mechanism of the United Nations for Chernobyl issues, the Quadripartite Committee for Coordination must continue to operate.

3. The intention of the United Nations Secretariat to draw the funds and specialized agencies (IAEA, UNDP, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund) more actively into the activities of the Quadripartite Committee for Coordination should significantly widen cooperation to minimize the long-term consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

4. It would be desirable to establish an International Chernobyl Fund to provide financial support for implementing proposed projects. At this stage, project outlines should be refined and turned into actual projects acceptable to affected countries and to donors. The Government of Ukraine is prepared to provide comprehensive assistance for the implementation of projects approved.

5. In order for the United Nations to help elicit funds from donors, consideration should be given to greater cooperation between Ukraine and other Member States regarding matters connected with the closure and decommissioning of the Chernobyl nuclear power station.

6. A comprehensive programme for 2003 to 2005 and the period up to 2010 is being drafted for the socio-economic revival and development of the areas contaminated by radiation following the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station and the areas of mass population resettlement. Efforts should be made to involve international organizations, the United Nations, world-renowned specialists on such issues and resources from international funds in the development and implementation of the programme.

7. An effective way to provide support for the affected population would be to set up five social and psychological rehabilitation and public information centres, involving the office of the United Nations representative in Ukraine. The Ministry of Emergencies is proposing to involve individual United Nations programmes (using international funds) in expanding the network of such interregional centres in places inhabited by victims of the disaster in order to help address their social problems.

8. The international community should be involved in determining which medical centres should treat individuals needing organ and tissue transplants, heart and brain surgery, oncological care and so on, and in financing that treatment.

9. Many non-governmental organizations from Ukraine and the rest of the world organize treatment abroad for children who are victims of the disaster. The opportunities for such treatment available from international organizations could be better exploited if they were coordinated by UNICEF.

10. There is a demand for more effective involvement of international organizations, especially the United Nations, in developing telecommunications for rapid worldwide exchange and dissemination of radiological and environmental information and medical statistics connected with the Chernobyl disaster.

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Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

Follow-up to the United Nations special session on children

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to the request of the General Assembly to the Secretary-General, in its resolution 57/190 of 18 December 2002, to prepare a report on progress achieved in realizing the commitments set out in the final document of the twenty-seventh special session of the Assembly, entitled "A world fit for children", with a view to identifying problems and constraints and making recommendations on the action needed to achieve further progress, and to submit the report to the Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

* A/58/150.

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I. Introduction

1. The special session of the General Assembly on children, held from 8 to 10 May 2002, was the first session of the Assembly devoted exclusively to children. It was also the first time that delegations to the Assembly included children as official members. The twenty-seventh special session was convened to review progress since the World Summit for Children in 1990 and to re-energize the global commitment to children.

2. At the special session, delegations from 190 countries adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex), which committed their Governments to a time-bound set of specific goals for children and young people, with a particular focus on: (a) promoting healthy lives; (b) providing quality education; (c) protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and (d) combating HIV/AIDS.

3. In addition, delegates committed their Governments to a framework for moving forward, which included:

(a) Developing or strengthening of national and, where appropriate, regional action plans for children, including a set of specific time-bound and measurable goals and targets based on the Plan of Action, by the end of 2003, with wide involvement of civil society, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and children;

(b) Strengthening national planning, coordination, implementation and resource allocation for children and integrating the international goals of "A world fit for children" into the policies and plans of national Governments;

(c) Establishing or strengthening national bodies for the promotion and protection of children's rights;

(d) Regular monitoring of the situation of children at the national level and periodic reviews of progress towards the fulfilment of the global agenda.

4. The Declaration and Plan of Action are the international community's pledge to act together to build a better world for children. Their four major goals reinforce the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, seven of which directly address and affect the rights of children. Thus, building a world fit for children will be a major contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the achievement of which is of central importance to children.

5. "A world fit for children" provides a stepping stone for achieving the ideals and standards set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

6. It should be noted that "A world fit for children" and the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development[1] and the Plan of Implementation[2] of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, are mutually supportive. Investing effectively in children is a powerful force for achieving true sustainable development. Healthy, well-nourished and educated children become productive young adults. These young adults may become healthy, educated parents — a true measure of sustainable development.

7. The HIV/AIDS-related goals set out in "A world fit for children" are firmly grounded in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (resolution S-26/2, annex), adopted at the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly, on HIV/AIDS. The Declaration's goals and commitments on the health, development and protection of children, young people, women and families are paramount to achieving the goals of "A world fit for children" and the Millennium Development Goals.

8. The Monterrey Consensus adopted at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002,[3] renewed the world's commitment to unlock additional resources to invest in development. Studies show that investing in children can yield higher economic and social returns than virtually any other type of public and private investment. An investment of $1 in comprehensive child development programmes has a $7 return on future cost savings. The agenda of "A world fit for children", is therefore, a natural bridge between the Monterrey Consensus and the Declaration and Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

9. The substantive follow-up to the special session on children is taking place in the context of the coordinated follow-up to the other major international conferences and summits. Together, these constitute a holistic development agenda, with the overarching objective of eradicating poverty. The interlinked goals, targets and indicators of these conferences at the global, national and subnational levels call for an integrated and mutually supportive approach to follow-up and for close harmonization of planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation activities.

10. The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 57/190 of 18 December 2002. It presents a preliminary report of progress made in follow-up to the special session on children in the period since May 2002, globally and by region; highlights action already taken in the four major goal areas; and calls for renewed efforts to achieve "A world fit for children".

II. Progress in follow-up to the special session on children

11. At the special session on children, all countries committed to develop and/or strengthen national and, where appropriate, regional action plans for children through various mechanisms. Those plans were specifically identified in "A world fit for children" as an immediate follow-up action to be completed as a matter of urgency by the end of 2003. A critical first step towards the implementation of the commitments made at the special session. The plans provide a process for countries to translate the agreed international goals into national and subnational goals based on local needs and situations. It puts in place a mechanism to facilitate meaningful implementation, monitoring and review of the goals.

12. One year after the special session, mechanisms have been put in place in many countries and specific steps taken. Partnerships have been strengthened and commitment to action reinforced. Governments, foundations, NGOs, civil society organizations, the private sector and United Nations agencies have worked together at different levels to ensure that the Declaration and Plan of Action are enthusiastically and diligently pursued. However, follow-up actions have not received high priority in all countries or regions. More systematic efforts and

exchanges of experience are called for if the pledges made to children at the special session are to be fulfilled.

A. Global progress

13. Globally, there has been good progress in follow-up to the special session, despite the crises and conflicts that have affected a number of countries and regions since May 2002. Close to 140 countries have taken concrete actions to translate the commitments into national action plans and/or to integrate them into existing plans and policies. Information received by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as of the end of July 2003 indicates that 29 countries had completed or drafted new national plans of action for children and that 64 countries were in the process of or will start to develop such plans. In addition, 10 countries have updated their existing national plans, and 46 countries have integrated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into existing national plans and policies, poverty reduction strategies and sectoral policies. Many countries have been using multiple mechanisms in the follow-up to the special session. Overall, however, progress has been uneven.

B. Progress by region

Sub-Saharan Africa

14. About one half of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have taken specific follow-up actions. In Eastern and Southern Africa, six countries were in the process of developing or will start to develop national plans of action and seven countries have incorporated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into existing national plans, poverty reduction strategies and sectoral policies. In 14 countries, a considerable amount of awareness-raising took place after the special session. Five countries took advantage of the Day of the African Child and two of the International Children's Day of Broadcasting to disseminate information on the special session. "A world fit for children" was widely distributed in many countries and a child-friendly version — "A world fit for us" — was disseminated in a few countries. Numerous workshops and sporting and cultural events were organized to take the message of the special session to the general public. In some countries, children and young people have participated in the follow-up process.

15. In West and Central Africa, eight countries are in the process of developing or will start to develop national plans of action, and eight countries have incorporated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into national plans, poverty reduction strategies and sectoral policies. A meeting on children and poverty was organized jointly in May 2003 by the European Union, the United Nations system, the African Development Bank and other African institutions. Participants reviewed the situation of children and government representatives committed to accelerate progress towards the goals set out in "A world fit for children".

16. At the regional level, the African Union (AU), the Economic Commission for Africa and UNICEF are collaborating on the preparation of a major report on the state of Africa's children. That report, which is to be updated every two years, will assess the situation of children in relation to the commitments of the special session and will provide follow-up to the Unity's Cairo Declaration on African children adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 2001. In addition, UNICEF

and the Economic Commission for Africa have prepared a paper entitled "The Young Face of NEPAD" (the New Partnership for Africa's Development), which advocates for national, regional and international action to tackle priority issues such as HIV/AIDS and girls' education within the framework of NEPAD and calls for the well-being of children to be included in NEPAD's peer review mechanism.

17. Parliamentarians and NGOs have supported follow-up to the special session. For example, the coalition of African NGOs for children, which convened a pan-African conference in June 2003, adopted a legal and strategic framework for follow-up to the special session and approved a five-year plan of action.

Asia

18. In East Asia and the Pacific, 15 countries have developed or are in the process of developing their national plans of action. One country has decided to implement the Millennium Development Goals and its poverty reduction strategy at the local level while another has incorporated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into its national development plan. At the third East Asia and the Pacific Regional Children and Young People's Forum, held in December 2002, young people and youth organizations shared lessons learned and discussed ways to further strengthen their countries' follow-up actions. They developed concrete strategies and projects, including regional networking, advocacy, research, training and capacity-building. They also prepared a statement to be sent to Governments, NGOs and civil society organizations in the region to urge them to support meaningful participation by children and young people.

19. The sixth East Asia and the Pacific Ministerial Consultation on Children, which was held in May 2003 in Indonesia, reviewed progress made in the region for children in relation to the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of "A world fit for children". The countries agreed to enhance children's rights and to strengthen partnerships for and with children. The Bali Consensus, a regional commitment and plan of action for every nation in the region to work towards improving children's rights, was adopted at the Consultation. Member countries agreed on strategies to strengthen national planning and ensure coordination, implementation and recourses to fulfil their commitments for children. In reviewing the situation, the region has identified education as an overarching imperative with four issues set as regional priorities: acting against commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children; fighting HIV/AIDS; improving nutrition; and reducing maternal and neonatal mortality.

20. In South Asia, five countries have been preparing national plans of action; one country has integrated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into the national development framework, within the context of repatriation, rehabilitation and reconstruction; another country is incorporating the agenda into existing national planning mechanisms; and one country has been developing a poverty reduction strategy reflecting that agenda.

21. The process of preparing the national plans of action has stimulated new partnerships and networking among stakeholders, for example with postal departments and chambers of commerce. Since the special session and the associated children's forum, many countries in the region have seen a greater acceptance of children's participation in decisions that affect them.

Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States

22. The region has seen growing and diverse participation in the follow-up to the special session by political leaders, civil society activists and young people. This demonstrates clearly that there is increasing political commitment to addressing the many challenges of creating a region fit for children. Of 22 countries, three have completed national plans of action and 14 countries are updating the existing national plans or developing new ones. Two countries are developing sectoral plans in line with the agenda of "A world fit for children", and eight countries have incorporated the agenda into poverty reduction strategies and other policy instruments.

23. In June 2002, the region's emerging civil society took a major step forward by launching the NGO/UNICEF Regional Network for Children in Sarajevo. Bringing together national NGO networks representing more than 1,800 civil society organizations from all countries of the region, the statute and action plan of the Regional Network include commitments to achieving the goals of "A world fit for children" in the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The national NGO networks were involved in the process of developing national plans of action and other policy instruments in 18 countries. The Regional Network also launched its first major advocacy campaign, "Leave No Child Out" during its General Assembly in June 2003, focusing on children who face social exclusion due to poverty, disability, displacement, gender and ethnic discrimination, as well as stigmatization arising from institutionalization and HIV/AIDS.

24. A major priority in the region for achieving and sustaining the goals of "A world fit for children" is participation of children and young people. In 17 countries in the region, there have been positive results in terms of meaningful partnerships with children and young people in the development of national plans of action and other policy instruments that affect them.

25. The second Intergovernmental Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia, co-organized by the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Germany, is scheduled to take place in Sarajevo in May 2004. Its aim is to motivate further countries from Western, Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States to integrate the agenda of "A world fit for children" into national policy and legislative frameworks; increase budgetary allocations for children; and improve monitoring of progress towards the goals. The conference will promote political commitment and support by civil society, enhance participation from all sectors of society and leverage existing policy and legislative frameworks in favour of children.

Latin America and the Caribbean

26. Follow-up to the special session in the region has centred on the preparation of national plans of action and on mobilizing political leaders, the media, civil society and children and adolescents in favour of children's rights and the achievement of the goals of "A world fit for children". Five countries have launched new national plans of action; three are likely to complete their programmes by the end of 2003; and another 13 are in the process of developing and finalizing them.

27. There have also been significant actions in support of national efforts at the subregional level. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has drafted a human and social development strategy with a mandate to reflect the goals of "A world fit for children". CARICOM has identified early childhood development, quality basic education, child protection and the fight against HIV/AIDS as the main focus for action in the subregion.

28. Political mobilization has been strengthened through the Ibero-American summits, which bring together the Presidents and Heads of Government of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries in Latin America and Europe. The twelfth Ibero-American Summit, held in the Dominican Republic in late 2002, was preceded by a ministerial meeting on children and adolescents, which focused on: (a) the specific follow-up plan for the special session; (b) the fulfilment of all Ibero-American commitments for children; and (c) mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress in the implementation of national plans of action in the region.

29. The region has seen many types of social mobilization in favour of "A world fit for children". The "Manifesto for an economy and democracy for children and adolescents", issued by Ibero-American intellectuals, urges international financial institutions, multinational companies, multilateral cooperation agencies and private investors to ensure that no child or adolescent suffers from hunger; that all children and adolescents go to school; and that no child or adolescent has to work or suffer from any type of exploitation and abuse. The Latin America and Caribbean Caucus has been engaged in monitoring the development of national plans of action for child rights in the region.

Middle East and North Africa

30. Despite an atmosphere of conflict and uncertainty in the region, three countries have drafted national plans of action and five are in the process or will start the process of preparing one. Two countries have incorporated the agenda of "A world fit for children" into poverty reduction strategies and sector-wide approaches to development.

31. Some regional organizations have taken follow-up actions. The Arab Summit adopted a comprehensive resolution entitled "An Arab world fit for children" in March 2002 in Beirut. The resolution committed Arab countries to act on behalf of children in line with the goals of "A world fit for children". The League of Arab States will convene its third high-level conference on children in January 2004. In preparation for the conference, the League and UNICEF have been collaborating on the preparation of a report on children in the Arab world. At a consultation of civil society organizations in July 2003 to coordinate and strengthen efforts to provide follow-up to the special session, they agreed to convene the second Arab civil society forum on children in Jordan in December 2003.

32. In May 2003, the Arab Institute for Human Rights organized a regional seminar on follow-up to the special session. NGO reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child were used to link the special session follow-up with implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A regional web site, operated by an NGO, has been developed and put into operation as an instrument for networking and information-sharing.

Industrialized countries

33. Many industrialized countries have taken action since the special session, albeit rather slowly. Six countries have completed or drafted national plans of action and another 12 are in the process of preparing or developing one. Children and young people, NGOs and civil society organizations are actively involved in most of these processes.

34. Many countries have organized consultations, advocacy and media campaigns to reach and involve the general public. A few countries have also explored ways to promote follow-up to the special session through official development assistance (ODA) policies and programmes. The national committees for UNICEF and other NGOs and civil society organizations have been an important force in strengthening follow-up activities.

35. A number of regional activities in Europe have sparked further interest and action by Governments and civil society partners. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and UNICEF organized a meeting of parliamentarians in December 2002 to discuss follow-up to "A world fit for children", focusing on sexual exploitation and children's participation. NGOs from Western Europe convened a first meeting to strengthen collaboration in follow-up to the special session.

36. Many municipal governments in Europe have been mobilized to follow up the special session through the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative, and a European network of child-friendly cities is being established. The European Network of Ombudspersons for Children has been actively promoting the establishment of new independent institutions for children in Europe and other regions.

C. Actions by non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations

37. The uniqueness of the special session and its follow-up process is characterized by the enthusiastic participation of NGOs and civil society organizations at international, regional and local levels, as well as by the participation of parliamentarians, religious leaders, communities, families, young people and children, some of whom play leading roles in their countries.

38. The Convening Committee of the Global Movement for Children, an alliance of international NGOs and UNICEF, and the Child Rights Caucus, a global consortium of NGOs, have carried out various activities at global and national levels to raise awareness about the agenda of "A world fit for children". The chief executive officers of the Alliance of Youth, a newly formed steering group mobilizing about 120 million children and young people, has recently joined forces to promote the agenda.

39. During its preparatory meeting in April 2003, the Inter-Parliamentary Union discussed ways for parliamentarians to protect children from abuse, neglect and all forms of violence. The leadership of parliamentarians is essential to implement legislative reforms for the realization of the goals both of "A world fit for children" and the Millennium Development Goals.

40. In many countries, public-private partnerships are being promoted to support actions for children. A few initiatives have been taken in Latin America and East Asia. The media and many communication networks, including the Latin American and Caribbean communications network for child and adolescent rights, have been actively engaged in advocating the agenda of "A world fit for children".

41. The World Conference on Religion and Peace, an international coalition of representatives from the world's major religions, engaged its religious leaders in the follow-up to the special session and in the Global Movement for Children through its Standing Commission on the Child and the Family. In Nigeria in June 2003, African religious leaders formed the African Council of Religious Leaders, a continental inter-faith group, to facilitate concerted action by religious bodies to contribute to goals of the special session related to HIV/AIDS and violence and to monitor national plans of action across the continent. UNICEF and the World Conference also reaffirmed their partnership across Africa, and are currently formulating plans for their global partnerships focused on the agenda of "A world fit for children".

42. In July 2002, the Latin American Episcopal Council and UNICEF strengthened their collaboration for follow-up to the special session by committing themselves to enhancing their joint activities for children in the areas of combating HIV/AIDS, birth registration, early childhood development, child labour, trafficking and sexual exploitation of children and child soldiers. In July 2003 in Santa Fé de Bogotá, UNICEF and the Episcopal Council agreed to launch jointly a publication to take stock of progress and draw on successful experiences in their collaboration. This publication will facilitate experience-sharing not only in Latin America, but also in other regions.

43. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted a resolution on child care and protection in the Islamic world in May 2003. The resolution recognized the Plan of Action of "A world fit for children" as a reference for action by 57 Islamic countries and paved the way for more action in those countries.

D. A coordinated response by the United Nations system

44. The United Nations system follows up the special session on children in a coordinated manner with the outcomes of other recent major United Nations conferences and summits. Its follow-up has focused on programmatic support and inter-agency collaboration, advocacy, communication strategies, resource mobilization, building partnerships and alliances and the quantitative and qualitative review of progress made by Member States.

45. Efforts are under way to ensure that the goals, targets and strategies of "A world fit for children" are adequately reflected in the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes. The United Nations system also has been working with the World Bank and some bilateral agencies to include the agenda of "A world fit for children" and the Millennium Development Goals in poverty reduction strategies and sector-wide approaches.

46. Many United Nations and other international agencies have taken action to support the agenda of "A world fit for children" and the Millennium Development Goals. In May 2003, the World Health Assembly endorsed new strategic directions

for child and adolescent health and development. The strategy, consistent with the goals of "A world fit for children", brings together crucial elements to reduce childhood deaths and long term disability. The World Health Organization (WHO), together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNICEF and other partners, launched the Healthy Environments for Children Alliance at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to intensify global action on environmental risks to children's health. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) contribute to achieving nutrition-related goals and have been working with other United Nations agencies to address the basic and underlying causes of childhood malnutrition. WFP and UNICEF have developed a minimum package of school feeding, health and education interventions, which are being delivered to school children. In reviewing periodic reports of States parties, the Committee on the Rights of the Child refers to the status of national plans of action in its dialogue with and recommendations to States parties.

47. The close correspondence of "A world fit for children" with the Millennium Development Goals and the coordinated follow-up process to international conferences facilitate monitoring of progress by various United Nations agencies. The annual reports of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals have reinvigorated existing collaborative efforts in monitoring activities in the areas of health, education, environment, poverty reduction and sustainable development within the United Nations system. The *Human Development Report*, published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), helps to keep a country-by-country "score card" of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. In the area of promoting healthy lives, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank help countries to improve collection and use of data on health systems and outcomes. In the field of basic education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF and the World Bank have strengthened their collaboration in monitoring data collection. FAO, UNICEF and WFP collaborate in the areas of nutrition and food security. In the battle against HIV/AIDS, all cosponsors of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) provide coordinated support to Member States in combating the epidemic. In the area of protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, the Understanding Children's Work project, a joint endeavour of the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF and the World Bank, has analysed a wide range of data related to child labour. UNICEF has also been working extensively with NGOs, including the Social Science Research Council and the Norwegian Refugee Council at the global level, and with many more at country level, to map the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

48. *Childinfo*, a software package developed by UNICEF for storing, organizing and displaying socio-economic data using tables, charts and maps, is currently used in more than 50 countries worldwide. The software has been adopted by Governments for their internal use. *Devinfo*, a development of *Childinfo*, is currently being tested and will be introduced to all United Nations country teams early in 2004 to support countries in monitoring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

III. Progress in the four major goal areas

49. One year after the special session, the major statistical indictors for the four goal areas of promoting healthy lives, providing quality education, protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence and combating HIV/AIDS have not changed much. However, important actions have been taken and initiatives are ongoing, which, in the medium and long term, will contribute to their achievement.

A. Promoting healthy lives

50. Despite progress made in the past decade to promote healthy lives, nearly 11 million children younger than five years of age die each year. A recent series of papers on child survival[4] has highlighted the importance of under-nutrition as an underlying cause of child deaths associated with infectious diseases and the effects of multiple concurrent illnesses. Pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria and HIV infections are still among the leading cause of child deaths, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Effective low-cost interventions are available and can prevent two thirds of these child deaths. The challenge is how to reach the children, women and families who need the interventions most, how to ensure equity of access and how to take promising pilot interventions to the required scale.

51. The new Accelerated Child Survival and Development programme of UNICEF is an integrated approach to maternal and child survival and development that uses cost-effective interventions. The programme, which covers over 16 million people in 11 countries in West and Central Africa with high under-five mortality rates, aims to reduce mortality and malnutrition in children under five years of age through integrated programmes, including the expanded programme on immunization, prevention and case management of the main childhood diseases (malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea) and improved antenatal care for women. The approach of the programme complements ongoing national health sector reform initiatives and sector wide approaches and encourages strong national and district-level ownership. Increasingly, it is being integrated into poverty reduction strategies and medium-term expenditure frameworks by participating countries. By the end of 2002, more than 100 countries in all regions had started implementation of the WHO/UNICEF Integrated Management of Childhood Illness strategy and more than 50 countries had started to put the strategy into action beyond the initial pilot districts.

52. Complementing the ongoing efforts of UNICEF and WHO, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization — a strategic alliance between the private and public sectors — has helped to infuse significant additional resources to increase and sustain high levels of immunization rates and introduced some new and improved vaccines against childhood diseases.

53. In addition to existing routine immunization programmes, intensive efforts in countries at high risk for measles epidemics have ensured that over 100 million children have been vaccinated against measles in over 20 countries in the past three years.

54. The global polio eradication initiative has seen further significant gains in the past year. The number of polio-endemic countries has dropped to just seven and the number of global polio cases has been reduced by 99 per cent, from more than 350,000 reported cases in 1988 to 1,918 in 2002. Despite a funding shortfall,

UNICEF, WHO, Rotary International and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, together with programme and donor countries, are determined to achieve the goal of worldwide polio eradication by 2005.

55. In the past year, the Roll Back Malaria global initiative has scaled up its activities to support the interim goals outlined in the Abuja Declaration and the goals of "A world fit for children". The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is a major new source of funding for tackling malaria in Africa. To date, 25 countries and one multi-country group have obtained a total of $256 million from the Fund for an initial two years to scale up malaria control activities, with the possibility of further expansion. The recent availability of long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets offers a major new opportunity for drastically reducing malaria-related mortality and morbidity and contributing to better health and productivity.

56. In 2002, UNICEF and WHO launched the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding to promote breastfeeding. The strategy calls upon Governments, NGOs and others to support a three-pronged approach to improve the nutrition of children through increased national commitment, including laws and policies and "baby-friendly" health systems and to provide support to communities and families.

57. A colloquium on nutrition and HIV, organized by UNICEF and the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action in the United Republic of Tanzania in August 2002, defined a common agenda for reducing the transmission of HIV to babies of HIV-infected mothers, while ensuring that breastfeeding is protected, promoted and supported among the general population. UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO have collectively finalized a framework on priority actions in HIV and infant feeding that provides guidance for coordination.

58. Progress continues to be made towards ensuring that all newborns are protected from brain damage and loss of learning capability resulting from iodine deficiency disorders. At a meeting in Moscow in October 2002, salt producers from three countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic States committed themselves to the implementation of universal salt iodization programmes, and advocacy efforts were stepped up to raise awareness. A number of countries are now reporting increased consumption of iodized salt.

59. The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, launched at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly in May 2002, has made its first grants to several countries. The grants will support national food fortification programmes. For years, it has been a policy of WFP to provide malnourished children with such fortified commodities as blended foods, oil and salt where and whenever possible. In collaboration with Governments, NGOs and the private sector, WFP is developing novel, field-based milling-cum-fortification technologies, adapted to local circumstances. At the annual meeting of the International Grains Council in June 2003 in London, the world's major producers and traders of food grains agreed to participate in the fortification of flour and staple foods with iron and vitamins. This commitment of the private sector opens another door for improving the nutritional status of children.

60. Good progress has been made in vitamin A supplementation, with some 72 countries implementing programmes, complementing other efforts of the

Micronutrient Initiative. Nearly one and a half million child deaths are now being averted every year, and the health and nutrition of millions of children are being improved, thanks to continuing progress in vitamin A supplementation.

61. Over 33 developing countries have been formulating national policies on adolescent health and development. These policies acknowledge the importance of providing information, skills, counselling and health services to adolescents and the necessary contribution of several sectors and civil society to address adolescent health and development.

62. National early childhood development policies have been developed by 17 countries and are being developed in 33 more. Based on UNICEF/WHO recommendations, a standard list of recommended family care practices has been promoted by over 60 countries, including home health care practices, hygiene, breastfeeding and complementary feeding, support to women's health during pregnancy and young child stimulation.

63. Significant efforts have been made to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. Since the special session, some 86 countries have established new facilities at subnational levels to increase family and community access to water and sanitation; and 10 countries in Asia and Central America have implemented arsenic mitigation programmes as a part of efforts to improve water quality.

64. In 2002, about 72 countries implemented community hygiene education and awareness-raising programmes focusing on improving hygiene practices. Some 47 countries are working with school sanitation and hygiene programmes, including construction of separate facilities for girls in schools as a strategy to improve the enrolment and retention rates for girls.

65. Following the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, the Third World Water Forum, held in March 2003 in Japan, helped to identify many specific ways to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for securing access to water and sanitation. At the Forum, UNICEF and its partners launched the WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All) Initiative, aimed at ensuring safe water and clean, separate sanitation facilities for boys and girls in primary schools. In collaboration with WFP and WHO, children enrolled in school feeding programmes in about 30 countries around the world are given deworming tablets on a regular basis.

66. There has been steady progress in Africa towards the eradication of dracunculiasis (guinea worm disease) through safe water interventions. The number of reported cases dropped from an estimated 3.5 million in 1986 to 54,487 in 2002 and several countries are now close to eradicating the disease completely.

B. Providing quality education

67. Much progress has been made in expanding access to and improving the quality of education for all children. Available data indicate that globally over 80 per cent of school-aged children are enrolled in school. However, over 100 million children still have no access to education. Huge disparities exist between regions and between and within countries, and the disparities affect girls, rural children, indigenous children and children from low-income households disproportionately. The main challenge to achieving the goals of "A world fit for children" and the

Millennium Development Goals is the development of affordable and sustainable strategies to address issues related to disparity. This requires a change in national investment patterns and the distribution of costs and benefits in education, the removal of barriers that create disparities, through, for example, elimination of school fees and other charges, and improvement in the quality and relevance of education.

68. The education goals contained in "A world fit for children" correspond closely to the goals of the 1990 Declaration on Education for All and of the 2000 World Education Forum. Since the special session, many countries have been developing specific action plans to achieve the education goals. By the end of 2002, at least 22 countries had developed an education for all plan, and more had incorporated education goals into their education sector policies and plans, poverty reduction strategies and national development plans.

69. The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, launched by the Secretary-General at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, has engaged a broad range of partnerships of United Nations agencies, bilateral organizations and civil society groups. Building on the comparative advantages of the participants, the partnerships have succeeded in raising awareness of girls' education at the global level. The Initiative now needs to be expanded to regional and country levels to provide effective and coordinated support to girls' education. The "25 by 2005" initiative, supported by UNICEF, aims to accelerate progress in girls' education with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of reducing gender disparity in basic education.

70. The Education for All Fast Track Initiative, initiated by the World Bank in April 2002, has moved forward in investing more national resources in education, increasing the proportion of education budgets to primary education and improving the efficiency of education systems through an indicative framework. This framework ensures minimum standards for class size, student/teacher ratios and funding for non-teacher costs. Some 23 countries have joined the Initiative and will develop education sector plans using the Initiative's indicative framework.

71. To improve the quality of basic education and address the issues of repetition and drop-outs, many countries have been implementing programmes for teacher training, curriculum development and development of pedagogical materials. Increasingly, UNICEF has been supporting countries in building "child-friendly" schools. This intervention provides a holistic approach and involves the training of teachers in active, child-centred learning and the provision of adequate supplies of school materials. It ensures a healthy and welcoming environment, including safe water and separate hygiene facilities for boys and girls. UNESCO continues to work with ministries of education to encourage improved resource distribution aimed at better educational outcomes.

C. Protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence

72. It is difficult to obtain good-quality data on violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination against children. In many ways, the very absence of reliable data shows the continued need for greater commitment to child protection. Evidence collected over the past decade suggests that about 180 million children are engaged in the worst forms of child labour, an estimated 1.2 million children are

trafficked every year, another 2 million are exploited through prostitution and pornography and some 40 million children suffer from abuse and neglect.

73. International legal instruments for the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and discrimination have garnered additional ratifications in the past year. There are now 192 State parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 143 to ILO Convention 182; 60 to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and 54 to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Good progress is being made on the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol against Trafficking in Persons. The first steps have been taken towards the development of a new international convention on the rights of people with disabilities, which is expected to include specific reference to children.

74. The Secretary-General's study on violence against children, requested by the General Assembly, is well under way. NGOs from around the world have pledged their support to make the study a success, including through networks and field consultations. Consultations on female genital mutilation/cutting, most recently in Addis Ababa and in Cairo, have brought together Governments, intergovernmental organizations and academics, religious leaders and NGOs to develop initiatives to meet the goals of "A world fit for children".

75. In 2003, the world saw horrendous examples of children being used in conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia and many cases of sexual abuse of children. It is clear that the call at the special session for greater consideration of children in peace-making processes needs to gain greater attention. Under the leadership of the World Bank, the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme in the Great Lakes region of Africa brought together donors, the United Nations system and seven affected countries to support the demobilization and reintegration of fighters with specific standards for child soldiers. These standards seek to protect the dignity and meet the specific needs of children, particularly girls.

76. Since the special session, eight more countries have developed time-bound plans to combat the worst forms of child labour, making a total of 11 countries. There has been increasing integration of campaigns for the elimination of child labour, with efforts to achieve education for all, as reflected in the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. Knowledge gaps are being addressed by the inter-agency research project, Understanding Children's Work, described in paragraph 47 above.

77. A number of agreements between Governments have been reached to fight cross-border trafficking of children. A memorandum of understanding on bilateral cooperation for eliminating trafficking in children and women and assisting victims of trafficking was signed in May 2003 by two Governments in Asia. A few Latin American countries have also initiated discussions in this regard.

78. In follow-up to the regional commitment and plan of action "Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation", adopted by the Council of Europe in 2001, the Council has established a group of specialists and, in collaboration with UNICEF, initiated a process for establishment of focal points for development of national plans of action. In 2003, guidelines for protection of children victims of

trafficking were developed and approved by members of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe's Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings.

D. Combating HIV/AIDS

79. Of the world's 42 million people now living with HIV/AIDS, an estimated 3.1 million are under the age of 15 years. Moreover, it is estimated that 6,000 young people aged from 15 to 24 years of age are infected every day and that globally fewer than one in five people at high risk of infection have access to basic prevention services. Girls are especially vulnerable because of economic, social, cultural and physiological factors.

80. Of the 103 countries reporting on the goals of the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, over 87 countries have developed policies or strategies to promote information, education and communication on HIV/AIDS and reproductive and sexual health education for young people.

81. UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO organized a global technical consultation in March 2003 to mobilize priority health services to achieve the global goals on young people and HIV/AIDS. The outcome of the consultation will contribute to ongoing efforts by countries to ensure that health systems are able to provide services to young people.

82. Countries have also been integrating life skills with knowledge to achieve behavioural change. A few countries have documented successes in integrating life-skills curricula into schools and shown linkages between completion of the curricula and lowered incidence of risky behaviours. WFP is supporting this effort by working with partners to ensure that, by 2005, at least two thirds of its school feeding programmes have an HIV prevention component in the curriculum.

83. Considerable headway has been made in policy development relating to prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT), with some 88 countries having developed policies and strategies. Progress is also being made in providing universal access to antiretroviral drugs in a few countries. PMTCT "Plus" — an initiative which will provide antiretroviral therapy to HIV-infected mothers and their partners — will provide a key entry point for care and support interventions. This initiative is supported by an inter-agency task team of UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank and other partners. WFP is also working in a number of countries to provide nutritional support to women who are enrolled in PMTCT Plus programmes.

84. About 17 countries have developed policies to address the special needs of orphans and other vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS, and another four are in the process of developing such policies. Thirty-seven of the reporting countries have legal measures in place to prohibit discrimination against populations that are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. In September 2002, the United Nations system and civil society partners convened a group of African leaders to help develop national policies to protect orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. In four southern African countries, FAO, UNICEF, WFP and others have been collaborating to improve food security and nutrition among children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. An inter-agency task team on HIV/AIDS and education, coordinated by UNAIDS and

UNESCO, has been working to ensure coherence and collaboration at country level in making schools responsive to the pandemic.

IV. The way forward

85. The limelight of the special session is fading, but the real work of implementing the Plan of Action of "A world fit for children" in fact has just started. The progress made to date represents a good start, but tremendous challenges lie ahead. All stakeholders — Governments, parliamentarians, civil society, NGOs, families, children and the international community — need to renew their commitment to children and take concrete actions to protect and fulfil children's rights.

86. The countries that have been developing or will develop national plans of action as instruments to promote and pursue the commitments made at the special session should aim to complete them by the end of 2003. Those countries that have chosen to use other mechanisms, such as poverty reduction strategies, national development plans and sector-wide approaches, should ensure that these plans and frameworks specifically and clearly reflect the key goals and targets of "A world fit for children", in order to enable periodic monitoring and future review of the progress made for children.

87. Lessons learned from the follow-up to the World Summit for Children during the 1990s show that national plans of action and other mechanisms can be effective as both a process and a tool for motivating and fostering priority actions for children. They can help to raise the profile of children in national development agendas and to establish and maintain a focus and sense of priority around children across sectors. National and subnational plans of action are especially effective when they are developed and monitored through consensus-building, public participation and partnerships. It is therefore imperative that broad consensus be built, and that civil society organizations, NGOs, families, children and young people be strongly engaged.

88. As recognized in "A world fit for children", countries should also consider reviewing and, where necessary, modifying their legal provisions, policies and the implementation of programmes relating to children as part of the follow-up process.

89. Regional consultations played an important role in the preparation of the special session. Regional groupings of Member States are continuing to make valuable contributions to reviewing the situation of children, addressing cross-border issues and disseminating information and experiences.

90. All countries should follow up the Monterrey Consensus[3] to increase financing for development. Countries that provide official development assistance (ODA) are encouraged to review the priorities and focus of their aid policies and programmes in the light of the goals of "A world fit for children". Besides additional resources, improved domestic governance, participatory planning and sound economic and social policies in developing countries are also fundamental to achieving and sustaining the goals set out at the special session.

91. All countries should consider establishing or strengthening appropriate national institutions for the promotion and protection of children's rights. Related to this, and as also envisaged by the Plan of Action of "A world fit for children",

countries may wish to develop closer linkages between the mechanisms they have already established for monitoring and reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the follow-up to the special session. All countries should establish or strengthen monitoring systems at national and subnational levels to assess progress towards key child-related goals and increase their national capacities to collect, analyse and disaggregate data by sex, age and other relevant factors. All countries should conduct periodic reviews of progress at national and subnational levels to address obstacles and accelerate progress.

92. "A world fit for children" calls on the Secretary-General to report regularly to the General Assembly on progress made in implementing the Declaration and the Plan of Action adopted at the special session. The Secretary-General proposes to provide an in-depth report to the General Assembly every five years, that is, in 2006, 2011 and 2016, based on national, regional and global reviews of progress. The first review process, which will lead to the report in 2006, will start soon. All countries are therefore encouraged to conduct in-depth reviews of progress in or before 2005. The United Nations system remains committed to providing support to national efforts and regional initiatives where required. As the world's lead agency for children, UNICEF will continue to work with Governments and with other United Nations and international partners to collect, prepare and disseminate information on progress and experiences gained in the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action, "A world fit for children".

Notes

[1] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[2] Ibid., resolution 2, annex.

[3] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[4] *The Lancet*, vol. 361, 28 June 2003.